

Reverend T.P. Wilson

## "Amos Huntingdon"

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### **Chapter One.**

#### **Bravely Done.**

"Help! help! holloa there! Master Walter—Mr Amos—Jim—Harry—quick—bring us a light!—lend a hand here!" Such were the words which suddenly broke the stillness of a dark October night, and roused up the household of Mr Walter Huntingdon, a country gentleman living on his own estate in Derbyshire. The voice was the coachman's, and came apparently from somewhere near the drive-gate, which was about a couple of hundred yards from the front door of the house. The evening had been dark and stormy; and it was in a lull of the tempest that the ominous sounds of distress reached the ears of the inmates of Flixworth Manor.

In a few moments all was bustle and excitement—lights flashing; feet hurrying; voices shouting; and then a rush for the scene of danger and trouble.

Outside the grounds in which the Manor-house stood were extensive grass lands on either side of the public road. In the field nearest to the drive-gate, and on the left as you entered it, was a deep and precipitous chalk-pit, now disused. This pit was some little distance from the road itself, and was not noticeable by persons unacquainted with the locality. It had been there no one knew how long, and was a favourite resort of adventurous children, a footpath to the village passing not far from its edge. Towards this chalk-pit the startled party of rescue from the house hurried with one consent, several of them carrying lanterns or extemporised torches.

Ten o'clock was striking in the distant church-tower as they gathered round the spot from which the cries for help had proceeded. A terrible sight was dimly revealed to them in the uncertain glare cast upon it by the lights which they carried. Hanging over the edge of the chalk-pit was the squire's carriage. One horse had broken away from the traces, but the other was struggling violently, and seemed likely, in its plungings, to force the carriage still further over the precipitous

side of the pit. The coachman, who had managed to spring unharmed from the box, was doing his best to restrain the violence of the terrified animal, but with only partial success; while the situation of Mr Huntingdon himself and of his maiden sister, who were inside the carriage, was perilous and distressing in the extreme.

The accident had been caused by a strange and savage dog suddenly springing at the horses' heads as the carriage was nearing the outer gate. The night was very dark, and the horses, which were young and full of spirit, being startled by the unexpected attack of the dog, which belonged to some passing traveller, sprang violently out of the road, and, easily crashing through the wooden fence, which happened to be unusually weak just at that part, carried the carriage along with them to the very edge of the chalk-pit, spite of all the efforts of the coachman to hold them in; so that when the people of the Manor-house came to the rescue, they found the carriage and its occupants in a most critical position.

Not a moment was to be lost. Jim, the stable-boy, was quickly by the side of the coachman, who was almost exhausted with his efforts to curb the terrified horse, the animal becoming still more excited by the flare of the lights and the rush of the newcomers.

"Cut the traces, man! cut the traces!" cried Harry the butler, as he gained the spot.

"Do nothing of the sort," said a voice close by him. "Don't you see that there may be nothing to hold the carriage up, if you cut the traces? it may fall sheer over into the chalk-pit.—Steady, Beauty! steady, poor Beauty!" These last words came from a young man who evidently had authority over the servants, and spoke calmly but firmly, at the same time patting and soothing the terror-stricken animal, which, though still trembling in every limb, had ceased its frantic plungings.

"William," continued the same speaker, addressing the coachman, "keep her still, if you can, till we have got my father and aunt out."

Just at that moment a boy of about seventeen years of age sprang on to the front wheel, which was a little tilted on one side, and with a violent wrench opened the carriage-door. "Father, dear father," he cried, "are you there? are you hurt?"

For a moment no reply was made; then in a stifled voice came the words, "Save your aunt, my dear boy, save your aunt!"

Miss Huntingdon, who was nearest the door, and had contrived to cling to a stout strap at the side of it, was now dragged with difficulty, by the joint efforts of her nephew and the butler, out on to the firm ground. Walter, her young deliverer, then sprang back to extricate his father. "Give me your hand, father," he cried, as he stooped down into the carriage, which was now creaking and swaying rather ominously. "A light here, Harry—Jim!" he continued. It was plain that there was no time for delay, as the vehicle seemed to be settling down more and more in the direction of the chasm over which it hung. A light was quickly brought, and Mr Huntingdon was released at last from his trying and painful durance; but not without considerable difficulty, as he had been much bruised, and almost stunned, by being dashed against the undermost door, and by his poor sister having been thrown violently on him, when the carriage had turned suddenly on its side.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!" shouted Walter, springing on to the hind wheel; "'all's well that ends well.' No bones broken I hope, dear father, dear aunt."

"Have a care, Master Walter," cried the coachman, who had now managed, with the elder son's help, to release the frightened horse from the traces, and had given it in charge to the stable-boy,—"have a care, or you'll be over into the chalk-pit, carriage and all."

"All right, William," cried the boy; "you look after Beauty, and I'll look after myself." So saying, he jumped down, making the carriage rock as he sprang to the ground.

And now, while Miss Huntingdon, who had suffered nothing more serious than a severe shaking, was being led to the house by her elder nephew and the female servants who had joined the rescuing party, Mr Huntingdon, having made a careful inspection of the position of his carriage, found that it was in no danger of falling to the bottom of the chalk-pit, as a stout tree, which sprang from the side of the pit, close to the top, had become entangled in the undermost hind wheel, and would form a sufficient support till the proper means of drawing the vehicle fully on to the level ground could be used on the morrow. All parties then betook themselves slowly to the Manor-house.

In the kitchen, William the coachman was, of course, the great centre of attraction to a large gathering of domestics, and of

neighbours also, who soon came flocking in, spite of the lateness of the hour, to get an authentic version of the accident, which, snowball-like, would, ere noon next day, get rolled up into gigantic proportions, as it made its way through many mouths to the farther end of the parish.

In the drawing-room of the Manor-house a sympathising group gathered round Mr Huntingdon and his sister, eager to know if either were seriously the worse for the alarming termination to their journey. Happily, both had escaped without damage of any consequence, so that before they retired to rest they were able, as they drew round the cheery fire, and heard the stormy wind raging without, to talk over the perilous adventure with mutual congratulations at its happy termination, and with thankfulness that the travellers were under the shelter of the Manor roof, instead of being exposed to the rough blasts of the storm, as they might still have been had the mishap occurred further from home. "Walter, my boy," exclaimed Mr Huntingdon, stretching out his hand to his younger son, "it was bravely done. If it had not been for you, we might have been hanging over the mouth of the chalk-pit yet—or, perhaps, been down at the bottom. You are a lad after your father's own heart,—good old-fashioned English pluck and courage; there's nothing I admire so much." As he said these words, his eye glanced for a moment at his eldest son Amos, who was standing at the outside of the group, as though he felt that the older brother had no claim on his regard on the score of courage. The young man coloured slightly, but made no remark. He might, had he so pleased, have put in his claim for loving notice, on the ground of presence of mind in stilling the plunging horse,—presence of mind, which commonly contributes more to success and deliverance in an emergency than impulsive and impetuous courage; but he was not one to assert himself, and the coachman and stable-boy, who knew the part he had taken, were not present to speak a word for him. So his younger brother Walter got the praise, and was looked upon as the hero of the adventure.

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## **Chapter Two.**

### **Under a cloud.**

Mr Huntingdon was a country gentleman of good fortune and popular manners, warm in his temper, hasty in his speech, upright in his transactions, and liberal in his dealings. No man

could make a better speech, when he had those to address who substantially agreed with him; while in ordinary conversation he generally succeeded in silencing an opponent, though, perhaps, more by the vehemence of his utterances than by the cogency of his reasonings. He had a considerable knowledge of field-sports and farming, rather less of literature, and less still of character. Naturally, he had a high opinion of his own judgment, in which opinion his dependants agreed with him before his face, but differed from it behind his back. However, every one allowed that he was a worthy man, a good landlord, a kind master, and a faithful friend. A cloud, however, rested on his home.

He had married early, and had made, in the estimation of his friends and of the county generally, an excellent choice of a wife in the person of the eldest daughter of a neighbouring squire. The marriage was apparently a very happy one; for the bride brought her husband a fair face, a loving heart, and a good fortune, and entertained his friends with due courtesy and cordiality. Moreover, she neither thwarted his tastes nor squandered his money; while he, on his part, pursued his hunting, shooting, and fishing, and his occasional magisterial duties, with due consideration for his wife's domestic and social engagements, so that their married life ran its course with as little friction or creaking as could reasonably be expected. Then there came, in due time, the children: first, a little girl, the object of her mother's passionate love, and as dear to her father as the mistake of her not having been a boy would allow her to be; then, after an interval of three years, came a son.

Now it so happened that at the time of this son's birth there was residing as a guest at the Manor-house a middle-aged gentleman reputed to be very rich. His name was Amos Sutterby. Mr Huntingdon had met him abroad in the second year after his marriage when taking a tour in Switzerland with his wife. Mr Sutterby was an old bachelor, rather bluff in his manners, but evidently in easy circumstances. The Huntingdons and himself had met on the Rigi, and the squire had taken to him at once—in a great measure, it may be, because Mr Amos was a good listener, and was very ready to ask Mr Huntingdon's opinion and advice. So the squire gave his new acquaintance a general invitation to Flixworth Manor, which the other cordially accepted: and in a little while this acquaintanceship ripened into a steady friendship, though by no means entirely to the satisfaction of Mrs Huntingdon. The result, however, was that Mr Sutterby spent several weeks of every year, at the close of the summer and beginning of the autumn, at the Manor, and

was the constant companion of the squire in his field-sports. Mr Huntingdon had taken care to satisfy himself that his new friend, though somewhat of an oddity, was a man of substance. True, he was only living in bachelor style, and possessed no landed property; but then he was able at all times to command ready money, and was reputed by persons who had long known him to be the holder of a large amount in the funds, an impression which seemed to be justified by some elegant and costly presents of which Mr Sutterby begged his friend's acceptance, as a token of his esteem and a mark of his appreciation of that kind hospitality which, as he said, an eccentric old bachelor living in lodgings in London was unable to return in kind.

Now it was, as has been said, during a visit of Mr Sutterby to Flixworth Manor that a son and heir was given to the Huntingdons. Of course there were great rejoicings, and no one seemed more glad than Mr Sutterby; and when he was asked if he would stand godfather to the child, he declared that nothing could please him more. So the christening day was fixed, and now the question of a name for the child was discussed, as father, mother, and their guest were sitting round the fire after dinner on the first day of Mrs Huntingdon's appearing downstairs.

"Of course he must be 'Walter,' after yourself," said the lady.

"Unless you would like to call him 'Amos,' after his godfather," said the squire, laughing.

"Capital!" exclaimed Mr Sutterby, with a roar of merriment. "In that case, of course, I shall feel it nothing less than my duty to make him my heir."

Now these words of their guest, though spoken just on the spur of the moment, and probably only in jest, made an impression on the mind of Mr Huntingdon which he could not get rid of. Why should not his friend have really meant what he said? He was rich, and an old bachelor, and had no near relations, so far as the squire knew; and though Mr Huntingdon's estate and fortune were large, yet his open-house way of living left him little to spare at the year's end, so that Mr Sutterby's money would be very acceptable, should he see fit to leave it to his godson. He therefore represented this view of the matter to his wife in private; but she would not hear of such a name as Amos being given to her son.

"Better lose a thousand fortunes, and quarrel with every friend they had or might have, rather than bring such an odious combination as 'Amos Huntingdon' into the family genealogy." The squire's temper, however, was roused by this opposition, and he wound up the only sharp altercation which had occurred between himself and his wife since their marriage by a vehement asseveration that "Amos" and nothing but "Amos" should be the Christian name of his first-born son.

Sorely against her will, his wife was obliged to yield; for though Mr Huntingdon had his own secret regrets that he had gone so far, yet he was one of those who, wanting that true greatness of character which leads its possessor to change a hastily adopted decision for one resulting from a maturer judgment, abide by what they have said simply because they have said it, and thus mistake obstinacy for a right-minded firmness. "Amos," therefore, was the name given, considerably to the satisfaction of Mr Sutterby, who made his godson handsome presents from time to time, and often spoke of him playfully as "my godson and heir." His mother, however, never forgave his name, and it was clear to all that the poor child himself had but a cold place in that mother's heart.

What wonder, then, that the boy grew up shy and reserved, dreading the sound of his own name, and shrinking within himself; for seldom was he gladdened by a father's or mother's smile. Added to this, he was not naturally of a lively temperament, and so never exhibited those boisterous spirits which might have won for him in a measure his father's heart. So he was brought up with all due care, as was suitable for an eldest son, and was sent to a public school as soon as he could be safely trusted from home. Indeed, all his wants were supplied but one, and that one was what his heart craved with a painful intensity—love. They gave him no real love, at least none that came like sunshine to his spirit. Such love as they did measure out to him was rather like the feeble sunlight on a cloudy winter day, that seems to chill as it scarcely struggles through the mists that almost quench it.

Such was Amos Huntingdon in his early childhood. But the cloud grew darker over him when he had reached the age of ten. It was then that the news came one morning that Mr Sutterby had died, leaving no will, for indeed he had nothing to bequeath except a few small personal effects, which went to some distant cousin. The fact was that, having an eye to his own personal comfort and well-doing, he had sunk a nice little fortune, which he had inherited from a maiden aunt, in a handsome annuity.

Thus he was able to travel and spend his money like a man of wealth, and was very glad of the opportunity of making Mr Huntingdon's acquaintance, which gave him access to a house where he could spend a portion of every year amidst bountiful hospitality and in good society. He had no deliberate intention of deceiving Mr Huntingdon about his son, but having once given him the impression that he would leave that son a fortune, he did not trouble himself to undeceive his friend on the subject; but being a man in whom self-interest spoke with a louder voice than conscience, he was not sorry to find the conviction strongly rooted in the squire's mind that Amos was to be his godfather's heir, as this conviction evidently added to the warmth of the welcome with which he was received at the Manor-house whenever he chose to take up his quarters there. And as he had always carefully avoided making any definite statement of his intentions, and had only thrown out hints from time to time, which might be either serious or playful, he was content that a state of things should continue which brought considerable satisfaction to himself, and could not deprive the squire or his son of anything to which either had a legal claim. The disgust, however, of Mr Huntingdon, when he found out how he had, as he considered it, been taken advantage of and imposed upon, was intense in the extreme. No one dared refer to Mr Sutterby in his presence, while the very name of the poor boy Amos was scarcely ever spoken by him except in a tone of bitterness; and even his mother looked forward to his holidays with more of apprehension than rejoicing.

There was one, however, who felt for that desolate-hearted child, and loved him with a mother's tenderness. This was his aunt, Miss Huntingdon, his father's unmarried and only sister. Half his holidays would be spent at her house; and oh, what happy days they were for him! Happy, too, at last in the brightest and fullest sense; for that loving friend was privileged to lead her nephew gently to Him who says to the shy schoolboy, as much as to the mature man, in his sorrows, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

In the meanwhile, when Amos was five years old, another son was born at Flixworth Manor. The baby was christened Walter, and nearly all the love that was the share of the elder brother was poured by both father and mother on the younger son. Years rolled on, and when our story opens Amos was twenty-two years of age. He had passed creditably through the university course at Oxford, but had not settled down to any profession. Walter was seventeen; his father's delight and



constant companion in his holidays; full of life, energy, and fun, with an unlimited good opinion of himself, and a very limited good opinion of his brother; while all around who knew him only a little were loud in his praises, which were not, however, echoed by those who knew him more thoroughly. At present he was remaining at home, after completing his school education, neither his father nor himself being able to make up their minds as to the sphere in which his abilities would shine the best.

And where was his sister, the eldest of the three, who was now twenty-five years of age? Alas! she had grievously disappointed the hopes of both father and mother, having clandestinely married, when not yet arrived at womanhood, a man altogether beneath her in position. From the day of that marriage Mr Huntingdon's heart and house were closed against her. Not so the heart of her mother; but that mother pleaded with her husband in vain for a reconciliation, for permission even to have a single meeting with her erring child. And so the poor mother's mind came under partial eclipse, and herself had been some years away from home under private superintendence, when the accident above recorded occurred to her husband and his sister.

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## **Chapter Three.**

### **A Talk at the Breakfast-Table.**

The morning after the accident, Miss Huntingdon, who was now keeping her brother's house, and had been returning with him the night before after a visit to a friend, appeared as usual at the breakfast-table, rather to Mr Huntingdon's surprise.

"My dear Kate," he said, "I hardly expected to see you at breakfast, after your fright, and shaking, and bruising. Most ladies would have spent the morning in bed; but I am delighted to see you, and take it for granted that you are not seriously the worse for the mishap."

"Thank you, dear Walter," was her reply; "I cannot say that I feel very brilliant this morning, but I thought it would be kinder in me to show myself, and so relieve you from all anxiety, as I have been mercifully preserved from anything worse than a severe shaking, the effects of which will wear off in a day or two, I have no doubt."

"Well, Kate, I must say it's just like yourself, never thinking of your own feelings when you can save other people's. Why, you are almost as brave as our hero Walter, who risked his own neck to get us out of our trouble last night.—Ah! here he comes, and Amos after him. Well, that's perhaps as it should be—honour to whom honour is due."

A cloud rested on Miss Huntingdon's face as she heard these last words, and it was deepened as she observed a smile of evident exultation on the countenance of her younger nephew, as he glanced at the flushed face of his elder brother. But now all seated themselves at the table, and the previous evening's disaster was the all-absorbing topic of conversation.

"Well," said the squire, "things might have been worse, no doubt, though it may be some time before the horses will get over their fright, and the carriage must go to the coachmaker's at once.—By-the-by, Harry," speaking to the butler, who was waiting at table, "just tell James, when you have cleared away breakfast, to see to that fence at once. It must be made a good substantial job of, or we shall have broken bones, and broken necks too, perhaps, one of these days."

"I hope, Walter," said his sister, "the horses were not seriously injured."

"No, I think not," was his reply; "nothing very much to speak of. Charlie has cut one of his hind legs rather badly,—that must have been when he flung out and broke away; but Beauty hasn't got a scratch, I'm pleased to say, and seems all right."

"And yourself, Walter?"

"Oh, I'm all safe and sound, except a few bruises and a bit of a sprained wrist.—And now, my boy, Walter, I must thank you once more for your courage and spirit. But for you, your aunt and myself might have been lying at the bottom of the chalk-pit, instead of sitting here at the breakfast-table."

Walter laughed his thanks for the praise, declaring that he exceedingly enjoyed getting his father and aunt on to dry land, only he was sorry for the carriage and horses. But here the butler—who was an old and privileged servant in the family, and therefore considered himself at liberty to offer occasionally a remark when anything was discussed at table in which he was personally interested—interrupted.

"If you please, sir, I think Master Amos hasn't had his share of the praise. 'Twas him as wouldn't let us cut the traces, and then stood by Beauty and kept her still. I don't know where you'd have been, sir, nor Miss Huntingdon neither, if it hadn't been for Master Amos's presence of mind."

"Ah, well, perhaps so," said his master, not best pleased with the remark; while Amos turned red, and motioned to the butler to keep silent. "Presence of mind is a very useful thing in its way, no doubt; but give me good manly courage,—there's nothing like that, to my mind.—What do *you* say, Kate?"

"Well, Walter," replied his sister slowly and gravely, "I am afraid I can hardly quite agree with you there. Not that I wish to take away any of the credit which is undoubtedly due to Walter. I am sure we are all deeply indebted to him; and yet I cannot but feel that we are equally indebted to Amos's presence of mind."

"Oh, give him his due, by all means," said the squire, a little nettled at his sister's remark; "but, after all, good old English courage for me. But, of course, as a woman, you naturally don't value courage as we men do."

"Do you think not, Walter? Perhaps some of us do not admire courage quite in the same way, or the same sort of courage most; but I think there can be no one of right feeling, either man or woman, who does not admire real courage."

"I don't know what you mean, Kate, about 'the same sort of courage.' Courage is courage, I suppose, pretty much the same in everybody who has it."

"I was thinking of moral courage," replied the other quietly; "and that often goes with presence of mind."

"Moral courage! moral courage! I don't understand you," said her brother impatiently. "What do you mean by moral courage?"

"Well, dear brother, I don't want to vex you; I was only replying to your question. I admire natural courage, however it is shown, but I admire moral courage most."

"Well, but you have not told me what you mean by moral courage."

"I will try and explain myself then. Moral courage, as I understand it, is shown when a person has the bravery and strength of character to act from principle, when doing so may

subject him, and he knows it, to misunderstanding, misrepresentation, opposition, ridicule, or persecution."

The squire was silent for a moment, and fidgeted on his chair. Amos coloured and cast down his eyes; while his brother looked up at his aunt with an expression on his face of mingled annoyance and defiance. Then Mr Huntingdon asked, "Well, but what's to hinder a person having both what I should call old-fashioned courage and your moral courage at the same time?"

"Nothing to hinder it, necessarily," replied Miss Huntingdon. "Very commonly, however, they do not go together; or perhaps I ought rather to say, that while persons who have moral courage often have natural courage too, a great many persons who have natural courage have no moral courage."

"You mean, aunt, I suppose," said her nephew Walter, rather sarcastically, "that the one's all 'dash' and the other all 'duty.'"

"Something of the kind, Walter," replied his aunt. "The one acts upon a sudden impulse, or on the spur of the moment, or from natural spirit; the other acts steadily, and from deliberate conviction."

"Can you give us an example, aunt?" asked the boy, but now with more of respect and less of irritation in his manner.

"Yes, I can," she replied; "and I will do so if you like, and my example shall be that of one who combined both natural and moral courage. My moral hero is Christopher Columbus."

"A regular brick of a man, I allow; but, dear aunt, pray go on."

"Well, then, I have always had a special admiration for Columbus because of his noble and unwavering moral courage. Just think of what he had to contend with. It was enough to daunt the stoutest heart and wear out the most enduring patience. Convinced that somewhere across the ocean to the west there must be a new and undiscovered world, and that it would be the most glorious of enterprises to find that new world and plant the standard of the Cross among its people, he never wavered in his one all-absorbing purpose of voyaging to those unknown shores and winning them for Christ. And yet, from the very first, he met with every possible discouragement, and had obstacle upon obstacle piled up in his path. He was laughed to scorn as a half-mad enthusiast; denounced as a blasphemer and gainsayer of Scripture truth; cried down as an ignoramus, unworthy of the slightest attention from men of science;

tantalised by half promises; wearied by vexatious delays: and yet never did his courage fail nor his purpose waver. At last, after years of hope deferred and anxieties which made him grey while still in the prime of life, he was permitted to set sail on what was generally believed to be a desperate crusade, with no probable issue but death. And just picture him to yourself, Walter, as he set out on that voyage amidst the sullen murmurs and tears of the people. His ships were three 'caravels,' as they were called,—that is, something the same as our coasting colliers, or barges,—and there was no deck in two of them. Besides, they were crazy, leaky, and scarcely seaworthy; and the crews numbered only one hundred and twenty men, most of them pressed, and all hating the service. Nevertheless, he ventured with these into an ocean without any known shore; and on he went with one fixed, unalterable purpose, and that was to sail westward, westward, westward till he came to land. Days and weeks went by, but no land was seen. Provisions ran short, and every day's course made return home more hopeless. But still his mind never changed; still he plunged on across that trackless waste of waters. The men mutinied—and one can hardly blame them; but he subdued them by his force of character,—they saw in his eye that which told them that their leader was no common man, but one who would die rather than abandon his marvellous enterprise. And you remember the end? The very day after the mutiny, a branch of thorn with berries on it floats by them. They are all excitement. Then a small board appears; then a rudely-carved stick; then at night Columbus sees a light, and next day lands on the shores of his new world, after a voyage of more than two months over seas hitherto unexplored by man, and in vessels which nothing but a special providence could have kept from foundering in the mighty waters. The man who could carry out such a purpose in the teeth of such overwhelming opposition, discouragement, and difficulty, may well claim our admiration for courage of the highest and noblest order."

No one spoke for a moment, and then Mr Huntingdon said, "Well, Kate, Columbus was a brave man, no doubt, and deserves the best you can say of him; and I think I see what you mean, from his case, about the greatness and superiority of moral courage."

"I am glad, Walter, that I have satisfied you on that point," was her reply. "You see there was no sudden excitement to call out or sustain his courage. It was the bravery of principle, not of mere impulse. It was so grand because it stood the strain, a daily-increasing strain, of troubles, trials, and hindrances, which

kept multiplying in front of him every day and hour as he pressed forward; and it never for a moment gave way under that strain."

"It was grand indeed, aunt," said Walter. "I am afraid my courage would have oozed out of every part of me before I had been a week on board one of those caravels. So all honour to Christopher Columbus and moral courage."

That same morning, when Miss Huntingdon was at work in her own private sitting-room, there came a knock at the door, followed by the head of Walter peeping round it.

"May I come in, auntie? I've a favour to ask of you."

"Come in, dear boy."

"Well, Aunt Kate, I've been thinking over what you said at breakfast about moral courage, and I begin to see that I am uncommonly short of it, and that Amos has got my share of it as well as his own."

"But that need not be, Walter," said his aunt; "at least it need not continue to be so."

"I don't know, auntie; perhaps not. But, at any rate, what father calls old-fashioned courage is more in my line; and yet I don't want to be quite without moral courage as well,—so will you promise me just two things?"

"What are they, Walter?"

"Why, the first is to give me a bit of a hint whenever you see me—what I suppose I ought to call acting like a moral coward."

"Well, dear boy, I can do that. But how am I to give the hint if others are by? for you would not like me to speak out before your father or the servants."

"I'll tell you, auntie, what you shall do—that is to say, of course, if you don't mind. Whenever you see me showing moral cowardice, or want of moral courage, and I suppose that comes much to the same thing, and you would like to give me a hint without speaking, would you put one of your hands quietly on the table, and then the other across it—just so—and leave them crossed till I notice them?"

"Yes, Walter, I can do that, and I *will* do it; though I daresay you will sometimes think me hard and severe."

"Never mind that, auntie; it will do me good."

"Well, dear boy, and what is the other thing I am to promise?"

"Why, this,—I want you, the first opportunity after the hint, when you and I are alone together, to tell me some story—it must be a true one, mind—of some good man or woman, or boy or girl, who has shown moral courage just where I didn't show it. 'Example is better than precept,' they say, and I am sure it is a great help to me; for I shan't forget Christopher Columbus and his steady moral courage in a hurry."

"I am very glad to hear what you say, Walter," replied his aunt; "and it will give me great pleasure to do what you wish. My dear, dear nephew, I do earnestly desire to see you grow up into a truly noble man, and I want to be, as far as God permits me, in the place of a mother to you."

As Miss Huntingdon uttered these words with deep emotion, Walter flung his arms passionately round her, and, sinking on his knees, buried his face in her lap, while tears and sobs, such as he was little accustomed to give vent to, burst from him.

"O auntie!" he said vehemently, when he had a little recovered himself, "I know I am not what I ought to be, with all my dash and courage, which pleases father so much. I'm quite sure that there's a deal of humbug in me after all. It's very nice to please him, and to hear him praise me and call me brave; but I should like to please you too. It would be worth more, in one way, to have *your* praise, though father is very kind."

"Well, my dear boy, I hope you will be able to please me too, and, better still, to please God." She spoke gently and almost sadly as she said these words, kissing at the same time Walter's fair brow.

"I'm afraid, auntie," was the boy's reply, "I don't think much about that. But Amos does, I know; and though I laugh at him sometimes, yet I respect him for all that, and I believe he will turn out the true hero after all."

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## Chapter Four.

## **The Crippled Horse.**

Nature and circumstances had produced widely differing characters in the two brothers. Walter, forward enough by natural temperament, and ready to assert himself on all occasions, was brought more forward still and encouraged in self-esteem and self-indulgence, by the injudicious fondness of both his parents. Handsome in person, with a merry smile and a ripple of joyousness rarely absent from his bright face, he was the favourite of all guests at his father's house, and a sharer in their field-sports and pastimes. That his father and mother loved him better than they loved Amos it was impossible for him not to see; and, as he grew to mature boyhood, a feeling of envy, when he heard both parents regret that himself was not their heir, drew his heart further and further from his elder brother, and led him to exhibit what he considered his superiority to him as ostentatiously as possible, that all men might see what a mistake Nature had made in the order of time in which she had introduced the two sons into the family. Not that Walter really hated his brother; he would have been shocked to admit to himself the faintest shadow of such a feeling, for he was naturally generous and of warm affections; but he clearly looked upon his elder brother as decidedly in his way and in the wrong place, and often made a butt of him, considering it quite fair to play off his sarcasms and jokes on one who had stolen a march upon him by coming into the world before him as heir of the family estate. And now that their mother—who had made no secret of her preference of Walter to her elder son—was removed from them, the cords of Mr Huntingdon's affections were wound tighter than ever round his younger son, in whom he could scarce see a fault, however glaringly visible it might be to others; while poor Amos's shortcomings received the severest censure, and his weaknesses were visited on him as sins. No wonder, then, that, spite of the difference in their ages and order of birth, Walter Huntingdon looked upon himself as a colossal figure in the household, and on his poor brother as a cipher.

On the other hand, Amos, if he had been of a similar temperament to his brother, would have been inevitably more or less cowed and driven into himself by the circumstances which surrounded him, and the treatment which he undeservedly received at the hands of his parents and younger brother. Being, however, naturally of a shy and nervous disposition, he would have been completely crushed under the burden of heartless neglect, and his heart frozen up by the withholding of a father's and mother's love, had it not been for



the gentle and deep affection of his aunt, Miss Huntingdon, who was privileged to lead that poor, desolate, craving heart to Him whose special office it is to pour a heavenly balm into the wounded spirit. In herself, too, he found a source of comfort from her pitying love, which in a measure took the place of that which his nearest ought to have given him, but did not. And so, as boy and young man, Amos Huntingdon learned, under the severe discipline of his earthly home, lessons which were moulding his character to a nobility which few suspected, who, gazing on that timid, shrinking youth, went on their way with a glance or shrug of pity. But so it was.

Amos had formed a mighty purpose; it was to be the one object of his earthly life, to which everything was to bend till he had accomplished it. But who would have thought of such an iron resolution of will in a breast like that poor boy's? For to him an ordinary conversation was a trial, and to speak in company an effort, though it was but to answer a simple question. If a stranger asked his opinion, a nervous blush covered his face as he forced out a reply. The solitude which others found irksome had special charms for him. With one person only in his own home did he feel really at ease,—that person was his aunt, for he believed that she in a measure really understood and sympathised with him. And yet that shy, nervous, retiring young man, down-trodden and repulsed as he was, was possessed by one grand and all-absorbing purpose: it was this, to bring back his sister to her father's home forgiven, and his mother to that same home with the cloud removed from her mind and spirit.

That both these objects *might* be accomplished he was firmly persuaded. At the same time, he was fully aware that to every one else who knew his father and the circumstances which had led to the sad estrangement of the daughter and removal of the mother, such a restoration as he contemplated bringing about would appear absolutely hopeless. Yet he himself had no doubts on the subject. The conviction that his purpose might and would be accomplished was stamped into his soul as by an indelible brand. He was perfectly sure that every hindrance could be removed, though *how* he could not tell. But there stood up this conviction ever facing him, ever beckoning him on, as though a messenger from an unseen world. Not that he was ignorant of nor underrated the magnitude of the obstacles in his way. He knew and felt most oppressively that everything almost was against him. The very thought of speaking to his father on the subject made a chill shudder creep over him. To move a single step in the direction of the attainment of his object required an

effort from which his retiring nature shrank as if stung by a spark of white heat. The opposition, direct or indirect, of those nearest to him was terrible even to contemplate, and was magnified while yet at a distance through the haze of his morbid sensitiveness. Yet his conviction and purpose remained unshaken. He was, moreover, fully aware that neither mother nor sister had any deep affection for him, and that, should he gain the end he had set before him, he might get no nearer to their hearts than the place he now occupied. It mattered not; he had devoted himself to his great object as to a work of holy self-denial and labour of love, and from the pursuit of that object nothing should move him, but onward he would struggle towards its attainment, with the steady determination which would crush through hindrances and obstacles by the weight of its tremendous earnestness.

This purpose had hovered before his thoughts in dim outline while he was yet a boy, and had at length assumed its full and clear proportions while he was at Oxford. There it was that he became acquainted with a Christian young man who, pitying his loneliness and appreciating his character, had sought and by degrees obtained his friendship, and, in a measure, his confidence, as far as he was able to give it. To his surprise Amos discovered that his new friend's father was the physician under whose charge and in whose house his own mother, Mrs Huntingdon, had been placed. Mr Huntingdon had kept the matter a profound secret from his own children, and no member of his household ever ventured to allude to the poor lady or to her place of retirement, and it was only by an inadvertence on his young friend's part that Amos became aware of his mother's present abode. But this knowledge, after the first excitement of surprise had passed away, only strengthened the purpose which had gradually taken its settled hold upon his heart. It was to him a new and important link in the chain of events which would lead, he knew, finally to the accomplishment of his one great resolve. And so he determined to communicate with his friend's father, the physician, and ascertain from him in confidence his opinion of his mother's mental condition, and whether there was any possibility of her restoration to sanity. The reply to his inquiries was that his mother's case was far from hopeless; and with this he was satisfied. Then he took the letter which conveyed the opinion of the physician to him, and, spreading it out before God in his chamber, solemnly and earnestly dedicated himself to the work of restoration, asking guidance and strength from on high.

From that day forward he was gradually maturing his plans, being ever on the watch to catch any ray of light which might show him where to place a footstep on the road which led up to the end he had in view. Earthly counsellors he had none; he dared not have any—at least not at present. Even Miss Huntingdon knew nothing of his purpose from himself, though she had some suspicions of his having devoted himself to some special work, gathered from her own study of his character and conduct; but these suspicions she kept entirely to herself, prepared to advise or assist should Amos give her his confidence in the matter, and seek her counsel or help. Such was the position of things when our story opens. Amos was waiting, hoping, watching; but no onward step had been taken since he had received the physician's letter.

A fortnight passed away after the accident, when Miss Huntingdon, who had now completely recovered from her fright and bruises, was coming out of a labouring man's cottage on a fine and cheery afternoon. As she stood on the doorstep exchanging a few parting words with the cottager's wife, she was startled by the sound of furious galloping not far off, and shrank back into the cottage, naturally dreading the sight of an excited horse so soon after her perilous upset in her brother's carriage. Nearer and nearer came the violent clatter, and, as she involuntarily turned her eyes towards the road with a nervous terror, she was both alarmed and surprised to see her nephew Walter and another young man dashing past on horseback at whirlwind speed, the animals on which they rode being covered with foam.

In a few moments all was still again, and Miss Huntingdon continued her rounds, but, as she turned the corner of a lane which led up to the back of the Manor-house, she was startled at seeing her nephew Walter in front of her on foot, covered with mud, and leading his horse, which was limping along with difficulty, being evidently in pain. His companion was walking by his side, also leading his horse, and both were so absorbed with their present trouble that they were quite unconscious of her approach. Something plainly was much amiss. Walter had had a fall, and his horse was injured; of this there could be no doubt. Could she be of any service? She was just going to press forward, when she observed Mr Huntingdon's groom coming from the direction of the house, and, as her nephew did not walk as if he had received any serious injury, she thought it better to leave him to put matters straight for himself, knowing that young men are very sensitive about being interfered with or helped when their pride has been wounded by any

humiliating catastrophe. So she turned aside into a small copse through which was a short cut to the house, intending to go forward and be prepared to render any assistance should Walter desire it.

None of the party had seen her, but she passed near enough to them on the other side of a tall hedge to overhear the words, "Won't the governor just be mad!" and then, "Here's a sovereign, Dick, and I'll make it all straight for you with my father." What could have happened? She was not long left in suspense; for her brother's voice in high anger soon resounded through the house, and she learned from her maid, who rushed into her room full of excitement, that Forester, Mr Huntingdon's favourite hunter, had been lamed, and otherwise seriously injured, and that Dick the groom, who had been the author of the mischief, had been dismissed at a moment's notice.

Poor Miss Huntingdon's heart misgave her that all had not been quite straightforward in the matter, and that the blame had been laid on the wrong person. So she went down to dinner, at the summoning of the gong, with a heavy heart. As she entered the drawing-room she saw her brother, who usually advanced to give her his arm with all due courtesy, sitting still in his easy-chair, hiding his face with the newspaper, which a glance showed her to be turned the wrong way up. Amos also and Walter were seated as far apart from their father and from each other as was possible, and for a few moments not a word was spoken. Then, suddenly remembering himself, the squire dismissed the paper from his hand with an irritable jerk, and, with the words, "I suppose that means dinner," gave his arm to his sister, and conducted her in silence to the dining-room.

Nothing in the shape of conversation followed for a while, Mr Huntingdon having shut up his sister by a very curt reply to a question which she put on some commonplace subject, just for the sake of breaking through the oppressive stillness. At length, when the meal was half-way through, Mr Huntingdon exclaimed abruptly,—

"I can't understand for the life of me how that fool of a Dick ever managed to get poor Forester into such a scrape. I always thought the boy understood horses better than that."

"I hope, Walter," ventured his sister in a soothing tone, "that the poor animal is not seriously, or at any rate permanently, damaged."

"Nonsense, Kate," he exclaimed peevishly;—"but, pardon me, it's no fault of yours. Damaged! I should think so. I doubt if he will ever be fit to ride again. But I can't make it out quite yet, it's very vexing. I had rather have given a hundred pounds than it should have happened. And Dick, too; the fellow told the queerest tale about it. I should have thought he was telling a lie, only he was taking the blame to himself, and that didn't look like lying.—By-the-by, Amos, have *you* been out riding this afternoon?"

"Yes, father."

"What horse did you ride?"

"My own pony, Prince."

"Did you meet Dick exercising the horses?"

"No; I didn't see anything of him."

"That is strange. Where were you riding to?"

"I was off on a little business beyond the moor."

"Beyond the moor! what can you have been wanting beyond the moor?"

Amos turned red and did not reply.

"I don't know what has come to the boy," said the squire surlily. But now Walter, who had not uttered a word hitherto, broke in suddenly, "Father, you mustn't be hard upon Dick. It's a misfortune, after all. There isn't a better rider anywhere; only accidents will happen sometimes, as you know they did the other night. Forester bolted when the little girl's red cloak blew off and flapped right on to his eyes. Dick was not expecting it, and tried to keep the horses in; but Forester sprang right through a hedge and staked himself before Dick could pull him in. It's a mercy, I think, that Dick hadn't his neck broke."

He said these last words slowly and reluctantly, for his eye had rested on his aunt's hands, which were being laid quietly one across the other on the table in front of her.

"Red cloak!" exclaimed the squire; "why, Dick told me it was a boy's hat that blew off and flapped against Forester's eyes."

"Ah! well, father, it may have been a hat. I thought he said a cloak; but it comes pretty much to the same thing."

There was an unsteadiness about the boy's voice as he said these last words which every one noticed except his father. The subject, however, was now dropped, and was not again alluded to during the evening.

Next morning after breakfast Walter knocked at his aunt's door. When he had entered and taken the offered chair by her side, he sat for a minute or so with eyes cast down, and silent.

"Well, Walter," she said after a while.

"*Ill*, auntie," he replied, in a voice between a laugh and a sigh.

"What is it, dear Walter?"

"Only those two hands of yours, dear auntie."

"Was there not a cause, Walter?"

No reply.

"Shall I tell you one of the stories you asked me to tell about moral courage?"

"Do, auntie dear," he said in a low tearful voice.

"My hero this morning, Walter, is George Washington, the great American general and statesman, the man who had so much to do in the founding of that great republic which is called the United States. A braver man never lived; but he was a brave boy too, brave with moral courage. Not that he wanted natural courage in his early years, for at school none could beat him in leaping, wrestling, swimming, and other athletic exercises. When he was about six years old, his father gave him a new hatchet one day. George was highly pleased, and went about cutting and hacking everything in his way. Unfortunately, amongst other things he used the hatchet with all the force of his little arm on a young English cherry tree, which happened to be a great favourite with his father. Without thinking of the mischief he was doing, George greatly injured the valuable tree. When his father saw what was done he was very angry, and asked the servants who had dared to injure the tree. They said they knew nothing of it; when little George entering the room and hearing the inquiry, though he saw that his father was very angry, went straight up to him, his cheeks colouring crimson as

he spoke, and cried, 'I did it. I cannot tell a lie. I cut your cherry tree with my hatchet.' 'My noble boy,' said his father, as he clasped him in his arms, 'I would rather lose a hundred cherry-trees, were their blossoms of silver and their fruit of gold, than that a son of mine should dare to tell a lie.'—Dear Walter, that was true noble courage; and George Washington grew up with it. Those are beautiful lines of one of our old poets, George Herbert,—

"Dare to be true, nothing can need a lie;  
The fault that needs it most grows two thereby."

She paused. Her nephew kept silent for a time, nervously twisting the fringe of her little work-table; and then he said very slowly and sadly,—

"So, auntie, you have found me out. Yes, I've been a beastly coward, and I'm heartily ashamed of myself."

"Well, dear boy," replied his aunt, "tell me all about it; happily, it is never too late to mend."

"Yes, dear Aunt Kate, I'll tell you all. Bob Saunders called yesterday just after luncheon, and asked me to go out for a ride with him, and if I could give him a mount, for his own horse was laid up with some outlandish complaint. I didn't like to say 'No;' but my own pony, Punch, was gone to be shod, and Bob had no time to wait. Well, Dick was just coming out of the yard as I got into it; he was riding Forester and leading Bessie, to exercise them. 'That'll do,' I said. 'Here, Dick; I'll take Forester out and give him a trot, and Mr Saunders can ride Bessie.' 'Please, Master Walter,' says Dick, 'your father's very particular. I don't know what he'll say to me if I let you exercise Forester.' 'Oh, nonsense!' I said. 'I'll make that all straight.' Dick didn't like it; but I wouldn't be denied, so he let us mount, and begged me to be very careful. 'Never fear,' I said; 'we'll bring them both back as cool as cucumbers.' And I meant it, auntie. But somehow or other our spirits got the better of us; it was such a fine afternoon, and the horses seemed wild for a gallop; so at last Bob Saunders said, 'What do you say, Walter, to a half-mile race just on to the top of the common? it'll do them no harm.' Well, I didn't say yes or no; but somehow or other, off we were in another minute, and, do what I would, I couldn't keep Forester back. Down the lane we went, and right over the common like lightning, and, when I was pulling hard to get Forester round, he went smack through a hedge, and left me on the wrong side of it. Bob laughed at first, but we soon saw that

it was no laughing matter. He caught Forester directly, for the poor beast had hurt his foot, and limped along as he walked; and there was an ugly wound in his chest from a pointed stick in the hedge which had struck him. So we crawled home, all of us in a nice pickle, you may be sure. And then I began to think of what father would say, and I couldn't bear to think that he would have to blame me for it all; so I turned into a regular sneaking coward, and gave Dick a sovereign to tell a lie and take the blame on himself, promising him to make it all right with my father. There, auntie, that's just the whole of it; and I'm sure I never knew what a coward I was before. But only let me get well through this scrape, and my name's not Walter if I ever get into such another."

"And now, dear boy, what are you going to do about this matter?" asked his aunt after a pause.

"Do, auntie? I'm sure I don't know; I've done too much already. It's a bad business at the best, and I don't see that I can do anything about it without making it worse."

"Then, Walter, is the burden still to rest on the wrong shoulders? and is Dick to be punished for your fault?"

"Oh, as to that, auntie, Dick shan't be the worse for it in the end: he has had a *sovereign* remedy already; and I'll beg him off from being turned away when I see my father has quite cooled down."

Miss Huntingdon said nothing in reply, but laid one of her hands across the other on her little work-table. Walter saw the action, but turned his head away and fidgeted in his chair. At last he said, "That's rather hard, auntie, to make me a moral coward again so soon."

"Is it hard, Walter?" she replied gently. "The next best thing to not doing wrong is to be sorry for it when you have done it."

"Well, Aunt Kate, I *am* sorry—terribly sorry. I wish I'd never touched the horses. I wish that fellow Bob had been a hundred miles off yesterday afternoon."

"I daresay, Walter; but is that all? Are you not going to *show* that you are sorry? Won't you imitate, as far as it is now possible, little George Washington's moral courage?"

"What! go and tell my father the whole truth? Do you think I ought?"



"I am sure you ought, dear boy."

Walter reflected for a while, then he said, in a sorrowful tone, "Ah, but there's a difference. George Washington didn't and wouldn't tell a lie, but I would, and did; so it's too late now for me to show moral courage."

"Not at all, Walter; on the contrary, it will take a good deal of moral courage to confess your fault now. Of course it would have been far nobler had you gone straight to your father and told him just how things were; and then, too, you would not have been Dick's tempter, leading him to sin. Still, there is a right and noble course open to you now, dear boy, which is to go and undo the mischief and the wrong as far as you can."

"Well, I suppose you are right, auntie," he said slowly, and with a heavy sigh; "but I shan't find *my* father throwing his arms round me as George Washington's father did, and calling me his noble boy, and telling me he had rather I told the truth than have a thousand gold and silver cherry-trees."

"Perhaps not, Walter; but you will have, at any rate, the satisfaction of doing what will have the approval of God, and of your own conscience, and of the aunt who wants you to do the thing that is right."

"It shall be done," said her nephew, pressing his lips together and knitting his brows by way of strengthening his resolution; and he left the room with a reluctant step.

He found his father, who had just come from the stables, in the dining-room. "Well, Walter, my boy," he said cheerily, "it isn't so bad with Forester after all. He has got an ugly cut; but he doesn't walk but very slightly lame. A week's rest will set him all right; but I shall send that Dick about his business to-morrow, or as soon as his quarter's up. I'd a better opinion of the boy."

"Dick's not to blame," said Walter slowly.

"Not to blame! How do you make out that? I'm sure, if he had had Forester well in hand, the accident couldn't have happened."

Walter then gave his father the true version of the mishap, and confessed his own wrong-doing in the matter. For a few moments Mr Huntingdon looked utterly taken aback; then he walked up and down the room, at first with wide and excited strides, and then more calmly. At last he stopped, and, putting

his hand on his son's shoulder, said, "That's right, my boy. We won't say anything more about it this time; but you mustn't do it again." The truth was, the squire was not sorry to find that Dick, after all, was not the culprit; for he had a great liking for the lad, who suited him excellently as groom, and had received many kindnesses from him. No doubt he had told him an untruth on the present occasion; but then, as he had done this to screen his master's favourite son, Mr Huntingdon did not feel disposed to take him to task severely for the deceit; and, as Walter had now made the only amends in his power, his father was glad to withdraw Dick's dismissal, and to pass over the trouble without further comment.

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## **Chapter Five.**

### **Is he ridiculous?**

Few people besides the actual sufferers can at all conceive or appreciate the intense misery which shy and retiring characters experience when themselves or their conduct are made the subjects of open ridicule, especially in company. Amos was peculiarly sensitive on this point; and Walter knew it, and too often ungenerously availed himself of this knowledge to wound his brother when he owed him a grudge, or was displeased or out of temper with him. He would watch his opportunity to drag Amos forward, as it were, when he could present him to his father and his friends in a ridiculous light; and then he would clap his hands, point to his brother's flushed face, and make some taunting or sarcastic remark about his "rosy cheeks." Poor Amos, on these occasions, tingling in every nerve, and ready almost to weep tears of vexation, would shrink into himself and retreat into another room at the earliest opportunity, followed not unfrequently by an outspoken reproach from his brother, that "he must be a regular muff if he couldn't bear a joke." Sometimes Walter's unfeeling sallies would receive a feeble rebuke from his father; but more often Mr Huntingdon would join in the laugh, and remark to his friends that Amos had no spirit in him, and that all the wit of the family was centred in Walter. Not so Miss Huntingdon. She fully understood the feelings of both her nephews; and, while she profoundly pitied Amos, she equally grieved at the cruel want of love and forbearance in her younger nephew towards his elder brother.

Some weeks had passed away since the disastrous ride, and Forester being none the worse for his mishap, Mr Huntingdon

allowed Walter to exercise him occasionally, accompanied by Dick, who had been fully restored to favour. It was on a lovely summer afternoon that the two had trotted briskly along to a greater distance from home than they had at all contemplated reaching when they started. They had now arrived at a part of the country quite unknown to Walter, and were just opposite a neat little cottage with a porch in front of it covered with honeysuckle, when Walter checked his horse, and said, "Dick, it's full time we turned back, or my father will wonder what has become of us." So they turned homewards. They had not, however, ridden more than a quarter of a mile, when Walter found that he had dropped one of his gloves; so, telling Dick to walk his horse, and he would join him in a few minutes, he returned to the little cottage, and, having recovered his glove just opposite the gate, was in the act of remounting, when he suddenly exclaimed, "Holloa! what's that? Well, I never! It can't be, surely! Yes, it is, and no mistake!"

The sight which called forth these words of surprise from Walter was one that might naturally astonish him. At the moment when he was about to spring into his saddle, the cottage door had opened, and out ran a little boy and girl about four or five years of age, followed by Amos Huntingdon, who chased them round the little garden, crying out, "I'll catch you, George; I'll catch you, Polly;" laughing loud as he said so, while the children rushed forward shouting at the fun. They had gone thus twice round the paths, when Amos became suddenly aware that he was being observed by some one on horseback. In an instant he made a rush for the house, and, as he was vanishing through the porch, a woman's head and a portion of her dress became visible in the entrance.

Walter paused in utter bewilderment; but the next minute Amos was at his side, and said, in a hoarse, troubled voice, "Not a word of this, Walter, not a word of this to any one at home." Walter's only reply to this at first was a hearty peal of laughter; then he cried out, "All right, Amos;" and, taking off his hat with affected ceremony, he added, "My best respects to Mrs Amos, and love to the dear children. Good-bye." Saying which, without stopping to hear another word from his brother, whose appealing look might well have touched his heart, he urged his horse to a canter, and was gone.

Amos did not appear among the family that evening. He had returned home just before dinner-time, and sent a message into the drawing-room asking to be excused as he did not feel very well. Miss Huntingdon went up to his room to see what was

amiss, and returned with the report that there was nothing seriously wrong; that her nephew had a bad sick headache, and that bed was the best thing at present for him. Mr Huntingdon asked no further questions, for Amos was not unfrequently kept by similar attacks from joining the family circle. His father sometimes thought and called him fanciful, but for the most part left him to do as he liked, without question or remark. And so it was that Amos had grown up to manhood without settling down to any profession, and was left pretty much to follow the bent of his own inclinations. His father knew that there was no need to be anxious about him on the score of worldly provision. He had seen well to his education, having sent him to a good school, and in due time to the university, and, till he came of age, had made him a sufficient allowance, which was now no longer needed, since he had come into a small fortune at his majority, left him by his mother's father; and, as he was heir to the entailed property, there was no need for concern as to his future prospects, so no effort was made by Mr Huntingdon to draw him out of his natural timidity and reserve, and induce him to enter on any regular professional employment. Perhaps he would take to travelling abroad some day, and that would enlarge his mind and rouse him a bit. At present he really would make nothing of law, physic, or divinity. He was sufficiently provided for, and would turn out some day a useful and worthy man, no doubt; but he was never meant to shine; he must leave that to Walter, who had got it naturally in him. So thought and so sometimes said the squire; and poor Amos pretty much agreed with this view of his father's; and Walter did so, of course. The Manor-house therefore continued Amos's home till he should choose to make another for himself.

But was he making a new home for himself? This was Walter's bewildering thought as he cantered back, after his strange discovery of his brother at the cottage. Was it really so? Had this shy, silent brother of his actually taken to himself a wife unknown to any one, just as his poor sister had married clandestinely? It might be so—and why not? Strange people do strange things; and not only so, but Walter's conscience told him that his brother might well have been excused for seeking love *out* of his home, seeing that he got but little love *in* it. And what about the children? No doubt they were hers; he must have married a widow. But what a poky place they were living in. She must have been poor, and have inveigled Amos into marrying her, knowing that he was heir to Flixworth Manor. Eh, what a disgrace! Such were Walter's thoughts as he rode home from the scene of the strange encounter. But then, again, he felt that this was nothing but conjecture after all. Why might

not Amos have just been doing a kind act to some poor cottager and her children, whom he had learned to take an interest in? And yet it was odd that he should be so terribly upset at being found out in doing a little act of kindness. Walter was sure that not a shadow of moral wrong could rest on his brother's conduct. He might have made a fool of himself, but it could not be anything worse.

One thing, however, Walter was resolved upon, he would have a bit of fun out of his discovery. So next day at luncheon, when they were seated at table, unattended by a servant, Amos being among them, but unusually nervous and ill at ease, Walter abruptly inquired of his brother across the table if he could lend him a copy of the "Nursery Rhymes." No reply being given, Walter continued, "Oh, do give us a song, Amos,—'Ride a Cock Horse,' or 'Baby Bunting,' or 'Hi, Diddle, Diddle.' I'm sure you must have been practising these lately to sing to those dear children."

As he said this, Amos turned his eyes on him with a gaze so imploring that Walter was for a moment silenced. Miss Huntingdon also noticed that look, and, though she could not tell the cause of it, she was deeply pained that her nephew should have called it forth from his brother. Walter, however, was not to be kept from his joke, though he had noticed that his aunt looked gravely and sorrowfully at him, and had crossed one hand upon the other. "Ah, well," he went on, "love in a cottage is a very romantic thing, no doubt; and I hope these darling little ones, Amos, enjoy the best of health."

"Whatever does the boy mean?" exclaimed the squire, whose attention was now fairly roused.

Amos looked at first, when his father put the question, as though he would have sunk into the earth. His colour came and went, and he half rose up, as though he would have left the table; but, after a moment's pause, he resumed his seat, and, turning quietly to Mr Huntingdon, said in a low, clear voice, "Walter saw me yesterday afternoon playing with some little children in a cottage-garden some miles from this house. This is all about it."

"And what brought you there, Amos?" asked Walter. "Little baby games aren't much in your line."

"I had my reasons for what I was doing," replied the other calmly. "I am not ashamed of it; I have done nothing to be ashamed of in the matter. I can give no other explanation at

present. But I must regret that I have not more of the love and confidence of my only brother."

"Oh, nonsense! You make too much of Walter's foolish fun; it means no harm," said the squire pettishly.

"Perhaps not, dear father," replied Amos gently; "but some funny words have a very sharp edge to them."

No sooner had Miss Huntingdon retired to her room after luncheon than she was joined by Walter. He pretended not to look at her, but, laying hold of her two hands, and then putting them wide apart from one another, he said, still keeping his eyes fixed on them, "Unkind hands of a dear, kind aunt, you had no business to be crossed at luncheon to-day, for poor Walter had done no harm, he had not showed any want of moral courage."

Disengaging her hands from her nephew's grasp, Miss Huntingdon put one of them on his shoulder, and with the other drew him into a chair. "Is my dear Walter satisfied with his behaviour to his brother?" she asked.

"Ah! that was not the point, Aunt Kate," was his reply; "the hands were to be crossed when I had failed in moral courage; and I have not failed to-day."

"No, Walter, perhaps not; but you told me you should like to be taught moral courage by examples, and what happened to-day suggested to me a very striking example, so I crossed my hands."

"Well, dear auntie, please let me hear it."

"My moral hero to-day is Colonel Gardiner, Walter."

"Ah! he was a soldier then, auntie?"

"Yes, and a very brave one too; indeed, never a braver. When he was a young man, and had not been many years in the army, he was terribly wounded in a battle, and lay on the field unable to raise himself to his feet or move from his place. Thinking that some one might come round to plunder the dead and dying before his friends could find him—as, alas! there were some who were heartless enough to do in those days—and not wishing that his money should be taken from him, as he had several gold pieces about him, he managed to get these pieces out of his pocket, and then to glue them in his clenched hand

with the clotted blood which had collected about one of his wounds. Then he became insensible, and friends at last recovered his body and brought him to consciousness again, and the money was found safe in his unrelaxed grasp. I mention this merely to show the cool and deliberate courage of the man; his wonderful pluck, as you would call it."

"Very plucky, auntie, very; but please go on."

"Well, many years after, he died in battle, and showed the same marvellous bravery then. It was in the disastrous engagement of Prestonpans, in the year 1745. The Highlanders surprised the English army, turned their position, and seized their cannon. Colonel Gardiner exerted himself to the utmost, but his men quickly fled, and other regiments did the same. He then joined a small body of English foot who remained firm, but they were soon after overpowered by the Highlanders. At the beginning of the onset, which in the whole lasted but a few minutes, Colonel Gardiner received a bullet-wound in his left breast; but he said it was only a flesh-wound, and fought on, though he presently after received a shot in the thigh. Then, seeing a party of the foot bravely fighting near him, who had no officer to head them, he rode up to them and cried aloud, 'Fire on, my lads, and fear nothing!' Just then he was cut down by a man with a scythe, and fell. He was dragged off his horse, and received a mortal blow on the back of his head; and yet he managed to wave his hat as a signal to a faithful servant to retreat, crying out at the same time, 'Take care of yourself.'"

"Bravo! auntie, that was true courage if you like; that's old-fashioned courage such as suits my father and me."

"I know it, Walter. But Colonel Gardiner showed a higher and nobler courage; higher and nobler because it required far more steady self-denial, and arose from true religious principle. I want you to notice the contrast, and that is why I have mentioned these instances of what I may call his animal bravery. I have no wish to rob him of the honour due to him for those acts of courage; but then, after all, he was brave in those constitutionally,—I might say, indeed, because he could not help it. It was very different with his moral courage. When he was living an utterly godless and indeed wicked life, it pleased God to arrest him in his evil career by a wonderful vision of our Saviour hanging on the cross for him. It was the turning-point of his life. He became a truly changed man, and as devoted a Christian as he had formerly been a slave to the world and his own sinful habits. And now he had to show on whose side he was and meant to be. It is always a difficult thing to be

outspoken for religion in the army, but it was ten times as difficult then as it is now, seeing that in our day there are so many truly Christian officers and common soldiers in the service. Drunkenness and swearing were dreadfully prevalent; indeed, in those days it was quite a rare thing to find an officer who did not defile his speech continually with profane oaths. But Colonel Gardiner was not a man to do things by halves: he was now enlisted under Christ's banner as a soldier of the Cross, and he must stand up for his new Master and never be ashamed of him anywhere. But to do this would bring him persecution in a shape peculiarly trying to him,—I mean in the shape of ridicule. He would, he tells us, at first, when the change had only lately taken place in him, rather a thousandfold have marched up to the mouth of a cannon just ready to be fired than stand up to bear the scorn and jests of his ungodly companions; he winced under these, and instinctively shrank back from them. Nevertheless, he braved all, the scorn, the laughter, the jokes, and made it known everywhere that he was not ashamed of confessing his Saviour, cost what it might; and he even managed, by a mixture of firm remonstrance and good-tempered persuasion, to put down all profane swearing whenever he was present, by inducing his brother officers to consent to the payment of a fine by the guilty party for every oath uttered. And so by his consistency he won at length the respect of all who knew him, even of those who most widely differed from him in faith and practice. There, Walter, that is what I call true and grand moral courage and heroism."

"So it was, so it was, dear auntie; but why have you brought forward Colonel Gardiner's case for my special benefit on the present occasion?"

"I will tell you, dear boy. You think it fine fun to play off your jokes on Amos, and nothing seems to please you better than to raise the laugh against him and to bring the hot flush into his cheeks. Ah! but you little know the pain and the misery you are inflicting; you little know the moral courage it requires on your brother's part to stand up under that ridicule without resenting it, and to go on with any purpose he may have formed in spite of it. I want you to see a reflection of Colonel Gardiner's noblest courage, his high moral courage, in your own dear brother, and to value him for it, and not to despise him, as I see you now do. You say you want to be free from moral cowardice; then, copy moral courage wherever you can see it."

"Well, auntie," said her nephew after a minute's silence, "I daresay you are right. Poor Amos! I've been very hard upon



him, I believe. It wasn't right, and I'll try and do better. But it's such a funny idea taking *him* as a copy. Why, everybody's always telling me to mark what Amos does, and just do the very opposite."

"Not everybody, Walter; not the aunt who wants to see you truly good and noble. There are a grandeur of character and true nobility in Amos which you little suspect, but which one day you also will admire, though you do not see nor understand them now."

Walter did not reply. He was not best pleased with his aunt's last remarks, and yet, at the same time, he was not satisfied with himself. So he rose to go, and as he did so he said, "Ah, Aunt Kate, I see you are in Amos's confidence, and that you know all about the little children and their cottage home."

"Nay, my boy," replied his aunt, "you are mistaken; Amos has not made me his confidante in the matter. But I have formed my opinion of him and his motives from little things which have presented themselves to my observation from time to time, and I have a firm conviction that my nephew Walter will agree with me in the end about his brother, whatever he may think now. At least I hope so."

"So do I, dear auntie. Good-bye, good-bye." And, having said these words half playfully and half seriously, Walter vanished from the room with a hop, skip, and jump.

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## **Chapter Six.**

### **Misapprehension.**

Miss Huntingdon was not the only person in the family at Flixworth Manor who entertained a deep affection for Amos Huntingdon, and highly valued him. Harry the butler loved him as if he had been his own son. The old man had been inherited with the estate by its present owner, who remembered him almost as long as he could remember anything, and had a sincere regard for him, knowing him to be one of those old-fashioned domestics who look upon their employer's interests as their own. Harry's hair was now snowy-white, but he retained much of his vigour unimpaired, the winter of his old age being "frosty, but kindly." So he had never gone by any other name than "Harry," nor wished to do so, with his master and his

master's friends. However, in the kitchen he expected to be called "*Mr. Frazer*," and would answer to no other name when addressed by boys and strangers of his own rank. When the first child was born Harry took to her with all his might. He knew that his master was disappointed because she was not a boy, but that made no difference to Harry. Nothing pleased him better than to act now and then as nurse to Miss Julia when she was still in long clothes; and many a peal of hearty and innocent mirth resounded from the kitchen premises as the servants gazed, with tears of amusement running down their faces, at *Mr. Frazer*, by the nurse's permission, pacing up and down a sunny walk in the kitchen garden, with steps slow and grotesquely dignified, holding the infant warily and tenderly, affirming, when he gave her back to the nurse, in a self-congratulatory tone, that "little miss" would be quiet with him when she would be so with no one else; which certainly might be cause for some wonder, seeing that he would usually accompany his nursings with such extraordinarily guttural attempts at singing as were far better calculated to scare any ordinary baby into temporary convulsions than to soothe it to rest when its slumbers had once been broken. And how the old man did rejoice when the little thing could toddle into his pantry! And no wonder that she was very ready to do so, for Harry had an inexhaustible store of plums, and bonbons, and such like enticements, which were always forthcoming when little miss gladdened his heart with a visit. So they were fast friends, and thoroughly understood each other.

When, however, a son and heir was born, and there was in consequence a perfect delirium of bell-ringing in the village church-tower, Harry by no means entered heart and soul into the rejoicings. "Well," he said with a sigh, "there's no help for it, I suppose. It's all right, no doubt; but Miss Julia's my pet, and so she shall be as long as my name's Harry." The new infant, therefore, received none of the attention at his hands which its predecessor had enjoyed. When pressed by the housekeeper, with an arch smile on her good-natured face, to take "baby" out for an airing, he shook his head very gravely and declined the employment, affirming that his nursing days were over. The name also of the new baby was a sore subject to Harry. "'Amos,' indeed! Well, what next? Who ever heard of an 'Amos' in the family? You might go as far back as Noah and you'd never find one. Mr Sutterby might be a very good gentleman, but his Christian name was none the better for that." And, for a while, the old man's heart got more and more firmly closed against the young heir; while Amos, on his part, in his boyish days, made no advances towards being on friendly terms with

the old servant, who yet could not help being sometimes sorry for his young master, when he marked how the sunshine of love and favour, which was poured out abundantly on Miss Julia, came but in cold and scattered rays to her desolate-hearted brother.

This kindly feeling was deepened in Harry's heart, and began to show itself in many little attentions, after the death of Mr Sutterby. He could not avoid seeing how the father's and mother's affections were more and more drawn away from their little son, while he keenly felt that the poor child had done nothing to deserve it; so in a plain and homely way he tried to draw him out of himself, and made him as free of his pantry as his sister was. And when Walter came, a few years before Mr Sutterby's death, putting Amos into almost total eclipse, Harry would have none of this third baby. "He'd got notice enough and to spare," he said, "and didn't want none from him." And now a new cord was winding itself year by year round the old butler's heart—a cord woven by the character of the timid child he had learned to love. He could not but notice how Amos, while yet a boy, controlled himself when cruelly taunted or ridiculed by his younger brother; how he returned good for evil; and how, spite of sorrow and a wounded spirit, there was peace on the brow and in the heart of that despised and neglected one. For he had discovered that, in his visits to his aunt, Amos had found the pearl of great price, and the old man's heart leapt for joy, for he himself was a true though unpretending follower of his Saviour.

So Harry's attachment to his young master grew stronger and stronger, and all the more so as he came to see through the more attractive but shallower character of Walter, whose praises were being constantly sounded in his ears by Mr Huntingdon. And there was one thing above all others which tended to deepen his attachment to Amos, which was Amos's treatment of his sister, who was still the darling of Harry's heart. Walter loved his sister after a fashion. He could do a generous thing on the impulse of the moment, and would conform himself to her wishes when it was not too much trouble. But as for denying himself, or putting himself out of the way to please her, it never entered into his head. Nevertheless, any little attention on his part, spite of his being so much younger than herself, was specially pleasing to Julia, who was never so happy as when she and he could carry out by themselves some little scheme of private amusement. Harry noticed this, and was far from feeling satisfied, observing to the housekeeper that "Master Walter was a nasty, stuck-up little monkey; and he only wondered how Miss Julia could be so fond

of him." On the other hand, Amos always treated his sister, even from his earliest boyhood, with a courtesy and consideration which showed that she was really precious to him. And, as she grew up towards womanhood and he towards mature boyhood, the beauty and depth of his respectful and unselfish love made themselves felt by all who could value and understand them, and among these was Harry. He could appreciate, though he could not explain, the contrast between a mere sentiment of affection, such as that which prompted Walter to occasional acts of kindness to his sister which cost him nothing, and the abiding, deep-seated principle of love in Amos which exhibited itself in a constant thoughtful care and watchfulness to promote the happiness of its object, his beloved sister.

So Harry's heart warmed towards his young master more and more, especially when he could not help noticing that, while Amos never relaxed his endeavours to make his sister happy, she on her part either resented his kindness, or at the best took it as a matter of course, preferring—and not caring to conceal her preference—a smile or word or two from Walter to the most patient and self-denying study of her tastes and wishes on the part of her elder brother. The old man grieved over this conduct in his darling Miss Julia, and gave her a hint on the subject in his own simple way, which to his surprise and mortification she resented most bitterly, and visited her displeasure also on Amos by carefully avoiding him as much as possible, and being specially demonstrative in her affection to Walter. Amos of course felt it deeply, but it made no alteration in his own watchful love to his sister. As for Harry, all he could do was to wait in hopes of brighter times, and to console himself for his young mistress's coldness by taking every opportunity of promoting the happiness and winning the fuller confidence of the brother whom she so cruelly despised.

But then came the crash; and this well-nigh broke the faithful old servant's heart. She whom he still loved as though she were his own, following her own unrestrained fancies, left her father's house to unite herself to a heartless adventurer before she had reached full womanhood, and thus closed the door of her old home against her. Then followed a frightful blank. An allusion by the old butler to "Miss Julia," when the squire and he were alone together, was met by a burst of violence on his master's part, and a threat that Harry must leave if he ever again mentioned his old favourite's name to her father. So his lips were closed, but not his heart; for he waited, watched, and prayed for better times, even after a still heavier cloud had

gathered over the family in the removal of poor Mrs Huntingdon, and all the love he had to spare was given to his poor desolate young master, whose spirit had been crushed to the very dust by the sad withdrawal of his mother and sister from his earthly home.

Walter too was, of course, grieved at the loss of his sister and mother, but the blow was far lighter to him than to his brother, partly from his being of a more lively and elastic temperament, and partly because he did not, being so young a boy when the sad events took place, so fully understand as did his elder brother the shame and disgrace which hung over the family through his sister's heartless and selfish conduct. His aunt soon came to supply his mother's place, and completely won the impulsive boy's heart by her untiring and thoughtful affection. And one lesson he was learning from her, which was at first the strangest and hardest of lessons to one brought up as he had been, and that was, to respect the feelings and appreciate, though by very slow degrees, the character of his brother. His own superiority to Amos he had hitherto taken as a matter of course and beyond dispute. Everybody allowed it, except perhaps old Harry; but that, in Walter's eyes, was nothing. Amos was the eldest son, and heir to the family estate, and therefore the old butler took to him naturally, and would have done so if he had been a cow without any brains instead of a human being. So said Walter, and was quite content that a poor, ignorant fellow like Harry, who could have no knowledge or understanding of character, should set his regards on the elder son, and not notice the otherwise universally acknowledged bodily and intellectual superiority of his more worthy self. No wonder, then, that pity more than love was the abiding feeling in Walter's heart towards his less popular and less outwardly attractive brother. And it was a very strange discovery, and as unwelcome as strange, which his aunt was now leading him gradually to make spite of himself, that in real sterling excellence and beauty of character the weight, which he had hitherto considered to lie wholly in his own scale, was in truth to be found in the opposite scale on his brother's side of the balance. Very slowly and reluctantly indeed was he brought to admit this at all, and, even when he was constrained to do so, he by no means surrendered at discretion to his aunt's view of the matter, but fought against it most vigorously, even when his conscience reproved him most loudly. And thus it was that a day or two after his conversation with Miss Huntingdon on the moral courage exhibited by Colonel Gardiner, he was rather glad of an opportunity that presented itself of exhibiting his brother in an unamiable light, and "trotting him out with his

shabby old horsecloth on," as he expressed it, for the amusement of himself and friends. It was on a summer evening, and very hot, so that Miss Huntingdon, her two nephews, and two young men, friends of Walter, were enjoying tea and strawberries in a large summer-house which faced a sloping lawn enamelled with flower-beds glowing with masses of richly tinted flowers. Mr Huntingdon was not with them, as this was Bench day, and he was dining after business hours with a brother magistrate. Walter, full of life and spirits, rattled away to his heart's content, laughing boisterously at his own jokes, which he poured forth the more continuously because he saw that Amos was more than usually indisposed to merriment.

"By-the-by, Tom," he said suddenly to one of his companions, "what about the boat-race? When is it to come off?"

"In September," replied his friend. "But we are in a little difficulty. You know Sir James has lent us the Park for the occasion, and a capital thing it will be; for we can make a good two miles of it by rowing round the ornamental water twice. It is to be a four-oared match; four Cambridge against four Oxford men, old or young, it doesn't matter. It is to be part of the fun on the coming of age of Sir James's eldest son. I rather think he was born on the eighth. Young James is a Cambridge man and a capital oar, and I'm of the same college, and so is Harrison here, as you know, and we shall have no difficulty in finding a fourth; but we are rather puzzled about the Oxford men. We can calculate upon three, but don't know where to look for the fourth. I wish, Walter, you'd been old enough, and a member of the university."

"Ay, Tom, I wish I had been. But, by-the-by, there's no difficulty after all. Here's Amos, an Oxford man, and a very good oar too—he's just the very man you want."

It was quite true, as Walter said, that Amos had been a good rower at the university. Rowing was one of the few amusements in which he had indulged himself, but he had never joined a racing boat though often solicited to do so.

"What do you say, Amos?" asked his young companion. "Will you join us, and make up the Oxford four complete? We shall be really much obliged if you will; and I'm sure you'll enjoy it."

"Thank you," replied Amos; "it's very kind of you to ask me, I'm sure. I should have liked it had I been able to undertake it, but I am sorry to say that it cannot be."

"Cannot be!" exclaimed Walter. "Why, what's to hinder you?"

"I cannot spare the time just now," said his brother quietly.

"Not spare the time!—not spare half-an-hour one fine afternoon in September! Dear me! you must be oppressed with business. What is it? It isn't farming, I know. Is it legal business? Have you got so many appointments with the Lord Chancellor that he can't spare you even for one day?"

"It will not be only for one day," replied Amos quietly. "If the race is to be a real trial of skill and strength we must train for it, and have many practices, and I cannot promise to find time for these."

"Oh, nonsense! Why not? You've nothing to do."

"I have something to do, Walter, and something too that I cannot give up for these practisings."

"What! I suppose you think such vanities as these waste of precious time."

"I never said nor thought so, Walter; but I have a work in hand which will prevent my having the pleasure of taking a part in this race, for it really would have been a pleasure to me."

"Ah! it must be a precious important work, no doubt," said his brother satirically. "Just tell us what it is, and we shall be able to judge."

Amos made no reply to these last words, but turned first very red and then very pale.

"Humph!" said Walter; "I guess what it is. It's a new scheme for paying off the national debt, by turning radishes into sovereigns and cabbage-leaves into bank-notes; and it'll take a deal of time and pains to do it." He laughed furiously at his own wit, but, to his mortification, he laughed alone. There was a rather painful silence, which was broken by the gentle voice of Miss Huntingdon.

"I think, dear Walter," she said, "that you are a little hard on your brother. Surely he may have an important work on hand without being engaged in such a hopeless task as attempting to turn radishes into sovereigns and cabbage-leaves into bank-notes. And does it follow that he despises your boat-race because he prefers duty to pleasure?"

"Ah! that's just it," cried Walter, in a tone of mingled excitement and displeasure. "Who's to know that it *is* duty? I think one duty is very plain, and I should have thought you would have agreed with me here, and that is to give up your own way and pleasure sometimes, when by doing so you may help to make other people happy."

"I quite agree with you in that, Walter," said his aunt. "It may be and often does become a duty to surrender our own pleasure, but never surely to surrender our duty."

"True, aunt, if it's really duty; but some people's duty means merely their own fancy, and it's very convenient to call *that* duty when you don't want to be obliging."

"It may be so, Walter; but, on the other hand, if we have seen cause even to impose upon ourselves something as a duty, we are bound to carry it out, although others may not see it to be a duty and may call it fancy; and certainly we should at least respect those who thus follow what they firmly believe they *ought* to do, even though we cannot exactly understand or agree with their views of duty. So you must bear with Amos; for I am certain that he would not say 'No' to you about the race if he were not persuaded that duty stands in the way of his taking a part in it."

"Ah, well! happy Amos to have such a champion," cried Walter, laughing, for he had now recovered his good-humour. "I suppose you are right, and I must allow brother Amos to have his duty and his mystery all to himself. But it's odd, and that's all I can say about it. Such short-sighted mortals as I am can't see those duties which are up in the clouds, but only those which lie straight before our eyes."

"And yet, Walter, there may be the truest and noblest heroism in sacrificing everything to these self-imposed duties, which *you* call duties up in the clouds."

"O aunt, aunt!" exclaimed Walter, laughing, "are you going to be down upon me again about moral courage? You have not crossed your hands this time, and yet I daresay it will do us all good, my friends here as well as myself, to have a lesson on moral courage from you; so listen all to my dear aunt. She is teaching me moral courage by examples. Who is your hero, dear auntie, this time?"

"Shall I go on?" said Miss Huntingdon, looking round on her hearers; then seeing an expression of interest on every



countenance, she continued, "Well, I will, if you wish it. My hero to-day is John Howard."

"Not a soldier this time, Aunt Kate."

"Not in your sense, Walter, but one of the truest and bravest in mine."

"Pray, then, let us hear all about his exploits, dear aunt."

"You shall, Walter. His exploits just consisted in this, that he imposed a great duty on himself as the one object of his life, and never let anything turn him from it, though obstacles met him in every direction such as nothing but the highest sense of duty could have nerved him to break through. In the first place, he was of a weakly constitution, and might therefore well have excused himself from any unnecessary labours, and might have indulged in luxuries which might almost have been considered as necessities to one whose appetite was not strong. He could well have afforded such innocent indulgence, for he was a man of good fortune. He was, however, remarkable for his abstemious habits; and having been led, when high sheriff of his county, to look into the state of Bedford jail, he was so shocked with the miserable condition of the prisoners and their being crowded together in a place filthy, damp, and ill-ventilated, that he set himself to make a tour of inspection of all the county jails in England, and soon completed it, and was examined before the House of Commons on the state of our prisons. And here he had to suffer from that misrepresentation and misunderstanding which are too often the lot of those who have set themselves to some great and noble work. It seemed so extraordinary to some members of Parliament that a gentleman, out of pure benevolence, should devote himself to such a painful work, and run the risk of contagion, that they could hardly understand it; and one gentleman asked 'at whose expense he travelled,'—a question which Howard could scarcely answer without some indignant emotion. You see, they could not appreciate such exalted heroism; and surely it required no little moral courage to persevere. But he did persevere, and his work grew upon him.

"From England he went abroad, and visited the prisons on the Continent, devoting his time and fortune to the great work of discovering, and, as far as might be, remedying, the abuses he found in these sad places of misery and often cruelty; and though he was introduced to the noble and the great wherever he went, he paid no visits of mere ceremony, but spoke out most fearlessly, even to the most exalted in rank, about the

abuses he found in the prisons under their control. He had set himself one great work to do, and he did it. Suffering, toil, hardship were endured without a murmur. Ah! was not this true heroism?

"And now I come to a point which I want you, dear Walter, specially to notice. Howard might have spent a portion at least of his time when abroad in visiting the beautiful picture-galleries and other works of art in the towns to which his great work led him, but he never suffered himself to do so. He would not even read a newspaper, lest it should divert his thoughts from the one great purpose he had in view. I am not saying for a moment that he would have been wrong to indulge himself with relaxation in the shape of sight-seeing and reading the news; but surely when he made everything bend to his one grand self-imposed duty, we are constrained to admire and not to blame, far less to ridicule, his magnificent heroism. Yes; he never swerved, he never drew back; and, best of all, he did his work as a humble and earnest Christian, carrying it on by that strength and wisdom which he sought and obtained by prayer.

"I cannot give you a better summing up of my hero's character than in the words of the great Edmund Burke. I have them here." Saying which she opened a small manuscript book containing extracts from various authors in her own handwriting, which she kept in her work-basket, and read as follows:—"He has visited all Europe, not to survey the sumptuousness of palaces, or the stateliness of temples; not to make accurate measurements of the remains of ancient grandeur, nor to form a scale of the curiosities of ancient art; not to collect medals, nor to collate manuscripts: but to dive into the depths of dungeons, and to plunge into the infection of hospitals; to survey the mansions of sorrow and pain; to take the gauge and dimensions of misery, depression, and contempt; to remember the forgotten, to attend to the neglected, to visit the forsaken, and to compare the distresses of men in all countries. His plan is original, and it is as full of genius as it is of humanity. It was a voyage of discovery—a circumnavigation, of charity.' Such was Burke's true estimate of my hero. And surely never was a nobler heroism—it was so pure, so unselfish; for when they would have erected a monument to him in his lifetime, and had gathered large sums for that purpose during his absence abroad, he at once put a stop to the project on his return home.—Am I wrong, dear Walter, in taking John Howard for one of my special moral heroes?"

"Not a bit of it, dear aunt. I confess myself beaten; I give in; I hand over the laurel crown to Amos: for I see that Howard's greatness of character was shown especially in this, that he imposed upon himself a work which he might have left undone without blame, and carried it out through thick and thin as a matter of duty. Bravo, Howard! and bravo, Amos, with your duty-work!—three cheers for you both! and one cheer more for Aunt Kate and moral courage." So saying, with a low bow, half in fun and half in earnest, to Miss Huntingdon and his brother, with a request to the latter to learn the Canadian boat-song, "Row, Brothers, Row," at his earliest convenience, he left the summer-house, taking his two friends with him.

Amos, who had been silent during the latter part of the discussion, lingered behind for a moment, and rising from his seat, took his aunt's hand between his own, pressing it warmly as he said, in a voice subdued and trembling with emotion,— "Thank you, dearest aunt; I see you partly understand me now. Some day, I hope, you may understand me more fully."

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## **Chapter Seven.**

### **Harry in the Secret.**

A week or more had passed since the conversation in the summer-house, and all the family were seated at luncheon in the dining-room of Flixworth Manor, when a shabby and dirty-looking note was handed to Amos by the butler. Having hastily read it, Amos exclaimed in an agitated voice, "Who brought this? where is he?"

"It's no one as I ever seed afore," replied Harry. "He said there was no answer, but I was to take it in straight; and I doubt he's gone now far enough away, for he was nothing but a rough-looking lad, and he ran off when he had given me the note as fast as his legs would carry him."

"Nothing amiss, I hope?" said Miss Huntingdon kindly.

"I hope not," replied her nephew. He was evidently, however, greatly troubled and confused, and looked nervously towards his father, whose attention at the time was being given to a noble-looking dog which was receiving a piece of meat from his hand.

"What's up now?" cried Walter, who, although he was learning to treat his brother with more respect and consideration, was still rather on the look-out for opportunities to play off his fun upon him. "Why, surely there's something amiss. What's the good, Amos, of putting a spoonful of salt into your gooseberry tart?"

Mr Huntingdon now looked round and stared at his elder son, who had by this time partly recovered his self-possession. "Nothing serious, my boy, I hope?" he said.

"I hope not, dear father. It's only about a little child that I take an interest in; he seems to have got away from home, and his friends can't find him."

"Is it one of my tenants' children?"

"No; it's a child that lives in a cottage on the Gavelby estate. We have struck up a friendship. I ride up there sometimes, so they have sent to me about him; and I will ride over after luncheon and see what can be done."

Nothing more passed on the subject during the meal; but Miss Huntingdon's watchful care of her nephew made her notice the deep lines of anxiety which had gathered on the forehead of Amos, and her heart ached for him, for she was sure that he was burdened with some unexpected trouble connected with the work he had set himself to accomplish. Dinner-time came, but Amos did not make his appearance. Ten o'clock struck, but he still lingered. Never before had he been absent for a night except when at school or college, or on a visit to some friend; for his habits were most regular, and he always rose and retired to rest early, his custom in this respect having been often the subject of remark and merriment to Walter, who would say to his friends that, "although Amos would never join in a lark, he had no objection to rise with one; nor to lie down with a lamb, though he hadn't it in him to skip like one." So when the family met next morning at breakfast, and nothing had been seen or heard of Amos, there was a shade of anxiety on every one's face.

"Where can the boy have been?" exclaimed Mr Huntingdon; "we never knew him go off like this before.—Hasn't he sent any message of any kind, Harry?"

"Not a word, sir, as far as I know."

"What's best to be done, then?—What do you say, Kate?" asked the squire.

"Perhaps Walter can make inquiries," suggested his sister.

"Well," replied her nephew, "I wouldn't mind, but really I don't know where to look exactly. I may be riding about all day, for he's gone after the missing child, I suppose, so it will be no use looking for him at the child's home. And, besides, I've an engagement to play lawn-tennis and go to luncheon at the Worthingtons', and I can't disappoint them."

"Not in such a case as this?" asked his aunt reproachfully. "Can't you send a note of apology to the Worthingtons? Suppose something serious has happened to your brother!"

"Oh, nonsense, Aunt Kate," cried Walter, who was not prepared to give up his engagement of pleasure; "don't be afraid about Amos; he'll turn up all right. He's on his way home, you may depend upon it; only perhaps he has been trying to solve some wonderful problem, and has forgotten all about such commonplace things as time and space, and has fallen asleep under a hedge."

"I will go myself, then," said Miss Huntingdon, "and see if I can hear anything of him from the neighbours."

"Indeed, Kate," said her brother, "you must do nothing of the sort. Set your mind at rest. I will go myself and make inquiries; and if the boy does not make his appearance by luncheon time, we must take further steps to find him."

"Can *I* be of any use, sir, in the matter?" asked Harry.

"Ah, that's just the thing!" cried Walter. "If you can spare Harry, father, Jane can wait at luncheon; and I'll just put Harry myself on what I think will be the right scent."

"Well, my boy, it can be so, and you can do as you say," replied his father. "I know we can trust Harry to do his best; he can take the old mare, and we shall do very well with Jane till he comes back."

Nothing loath, but rather gratified with the part he had to play and the trust placed in him, the old butler set out about noon on the old mare, accompanied by Walter, who was on his way to the Worthingtons'. Harry would have preferred managing matters in his own fashion, which would have been to go on a

tour of inquiry from farm to farm; but, having no choice, he surrendered himself to the guidance and directions of Walter. So they rode on together for some miles till they came within sight of the cottage where Amos had been seen by his brother playing with the little children.

"There, Harry," said Walter, "you see that cottage? just you call in there, and you will either find my brother there, if I am not mistaken, or, at any rate, you will find somebody who will tell you where to look for him." Then he turned and put spurs to his horse, and was soon out of sight, leaving the old servant to jog along at his leisure to the little dwelling pointed out to him, the roof of which he could just see distinctly in the distance.

"Humph!" said Harry half out loud, as he rather reluctantly made his way towards the cottage; "you might have gone yourself, Master Walter, I think, and saved an old man like me such a shaking as I've had on the old mare's back. But I suppose that 'lawn tens,' as they call it, is a mighty taking thing to young people; it seems all the go now; all the young gents and young ladies has gone mad after it. Knocking them balls back'ards and for'ards used to be called 'fives' when I were a boy, but they calls it 'tens' now; I suppose 'cos they does everything in these days twice as fast as they used to do. Well, it don't matter; but if it had been Master Amos, and t'other road about, he'd never have let 'tens,' or 'twenties,' or 'fifties' stand between him and looking arter a lost brother. But then people don't know Master Amos and Master Walter as I do. Their aunt, Miss Huntingdon, does a bit, and p'raps master will himself some day."

By the time he had finished this soliloquy Harry had neared the cottage. Then he quickened his pace, and having reached the little garden gate, hung his horse's bridle over a rail, with the full knowledge that the animal would be well content to stand at ease an unlimited time where she was left. Then he made his way up to the cottage door and knocked. His summons was immediately answered by a respectably dressed middle-aged woman, who opened the door somewhat slowly and cautiously, and then asked him civilly what was his business with her. "Well, if you please, ma'am," said the butler, "I'm just come to know if you can tell me anything about my young master, Mr Amos. He ought to have come home last night, and none of us has set eyes on him up to the time when I left home, about an hour since."

The person whom he addressed was evidently in a difficulty what to answer. She hesitated, and looked this way and that,

still holding the door ajar, but not inviting Harry into the house. The old man waited a few moments, and then he said, "If you please, ma'am, am I to understand as you don't know nothing about my young master, Mr Amos, and where he's gone?"

Still the other made no reply, but only looked more and more uneasy. It was quite clear to Harry now that she could give him the information he wanted, if only she were willing to do so. He waited therefore another minute, and then said, "You've no cause, ma'am, to fear as I shall get Master Amos into trouble by anything you may tell me. I love him too well for that; and I can be as close as wax when I like. You may trust me, ma'am, and he'd tell you the same if he was here."

"And what may your name be, friend?" asked the woman.

"Well," he replied, "the quality calls me 'Harry;' but every one else calls me Mr Frazer,—at least when they behaves as they ought to do. I am butler at Flixworth Manor, that's Mr Amos Huntingdon's home; and I've been in the family's service more nor fifty years come next Christmas, so it ain't likely as I'd wish to do any on 'em any harm."

"Well, Mr Frazer," said the woman, opening the door, "come in then; the fact is, I am almost as puzzled to know where Mr Amos is as you are. I have been expecting him all the morning, and he may be here any minute. But pray come in and wait a bit."

Accepting the invitation, Harry stepped into a neat little parlour, prettily but not expensively furnished. Over the chimney-piece was a large drawing in water-colours of Flixworth Manor-house, and, on either side of this, photographs of Mr and Mrs Huntingdon. What could it mean? But for Harry every other thought was swallowed up in a moment by his attention being called to a little girl, about four years of age, who stole into the room, and stood for a while staring at him with one finger in her mouth, and her head drooping slightly, but not so much as to hide a pair of lustrous hazel eyes. A neat and beautifully white pinafore was bound round her waist by a red belt, and a profusion of glossy brown ringlets fell upon her shoulders. The old man started at the sight as if he had been shot, and then gazed at the child with open mouth and raised eyebrows, till the little thing shrank back to the side of the woman who had opened the door, and hid her little face in her apron. "It's herself, her very own self," said Harry half out loud, and with quivering voice; "tell me, ma'am, oh, pray tell me what's this child's name!"

"Well, Mr Frazer," replied his companion, though evidently with some hesitation, "I understand that I may trust you. This dear child's names are Julia Mary, and I am her nurse, employed by Mr Amos to look after her for him."

"I begin to see it all now," said Harry half to himself. "Don't trouble yourself, ma'am; I don't need to ask no more questions. I don't want any one to tell me who Miss Julia's mother is; there can be no doubt about that, they're as like as two peas; and I begin to see a bit what Mr Amos has been a-doing. God bless his dear, unselfish heart! Come here to me, my child," he added with a pleasant smile. The little Julia looked hard at him from behind the shelter of her nurse's gown for a moment, but soon lost all fear, for there was something attractive to her in the old man's snow-white hair and venerable face, as, surely, there is commonly a sweet sympathy between the guileless childhood of infancy and the holy childhood of God—fearing old age. So she shyly drew towards him, and let him place her on his knee; and then she looked up wonderingly at him, as his tears fell fast on her brown hair, and his voice was choked with sobs. "Yes," he said, "my precious Miss Julia, you're the very image of what your blessed mother was at your age. I've had her like this on my knee scores of times. Ah! well, perhaps a brighter day's coming for us all."

We must now leave the old man happy over his gentle charge, and go back to the previous day when Amos, at luncheon time, received the little note which so greatly disturbed him. That note was as follows:—

"Respected Sir,—About ten o'clock this morning, as Master George and Miss Mary were playing in the garden, a strange man looked over the hedge and called Master George by name. He held out something to him in his hand, which Master George went out of the gate to look at. Then the man took him up into his arms, whispered something into his ear, and walked away with him. I was in the house at the time, and was told this by Miss Mary. What am I to do? Please, sir, do come over at once if you can.—Your obedient servant, Sarah Williams."

Amos, as we have seen, left home after luncheon, and did not return. He made his way as quickly as he could to the little cottage, and found Mrs Williams in great distress. The poor little girl also was crying for her brother, declaring that a wicked man had come and stolen him away. What was to be done? The cottage where the nurse and children dwelt together was in rather a retired situation, the nearest house to it being a farmhouse, which, though only a few hundred yards distant, was



built in a hollow, so that what was going on outside the cottage would not be visible to persons about the farm premises. Mrs Williams was the wife of a respectable farm labourer, of better education and more intelligence than the generality of his class. They had no children of their own, so that Mrs Williams, who was a truly godly woman, was glad to give a home for a time and a motherly care to the two little ones committed to her charge by Amos. The husband was, of course, absent from home during the working hours, so that his wife could not call him to her help when she missed the little boy; indeed, on the day of her loss her husband had gone with his master, the farmer, to the neighbouring market-town, some six miles off, so that she could have no assistance from him in the search for the missing child till late in the evening. As far as Amos could gather from the little girl's description, the man who had stolen away her brother was tall, had a long beard, and very black eyes. He was not on horseback, and there was no one else with him. But this was very meagre information at the best on which to build for tracking the fugitives. So Amos called Mrs Williams into the little parlour, and spread the matter out in prayer before God, whose "eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." Then wishing the nurse good-bye, with a heart less burdened than before, but still anxious, he remounted his pony, and turned him in the direction of the neighbouring farm-yard.

Having ascertained at the farm-house that no one had seen a man with a boy in his arms or walking by him pass that way, he proceeded down a long and not much frequented grassy lane at a jog-trot, but with small expectation of finding any clew that might guide him to the discovery of the lost child. He had ridden on thus about half a mile, when he paused at a place where another grassy lane crossed at right angles the one down which he had been riding. It was a lonely spot, but yet was a thoroughfare from which the roads diverged to one or two large villages, and led in one direction ultimately to the market-town. Close to the ditch opposite the road down which Amos had come was a white finger-post, informing those who were capable of deciphering its bleared inscriptions whither they were going or might go. Amos hesitated; he had never been on this exact spot before, and he therefore rode close up to the sign-post to read the names, which were illegible at a little distance off. To his great surprise, and even dismay, he noticed, dangling from one of the post's outstretched wooden arms, a silk handkerchief of a rather marked pattern. Could it really be? Yes, he could not doubt it; it belonged to little George: it was a present to the child from himself only a few days before. Amos's

blood ran cold at the sight. Could any one in the shape of humanity have had the heart to lay violent hands on the poor boy? There was no telling. He scarce dared to look towards the ditch lest he should see the lifeless body there. But perhaps a gipsy had got hold of the child, and stripped him for his clothes: such things used to be done formerly. But, then, why hang the silk handkerchief in such a conspicuous place? for it could not have got there by accident, nor been blown there, for it had been manifestly fastened and suspended there by human fingers. Trembling in every limb, Amos unfastened the handkerchief from the post. There was something stiff inside it. He unfolded it slowly; an envelope disclosed itself. It was directed in pencil. The direction was, "Amos Huntingdon, Esq. Please forward without delay."

Here, then, was a clue to the mystery. Amos opened the envelope and read the enclosure, which was also written in pencil, in a neat and thoroughly legible hand. It ran thus:—

"You are doubtless anxious to know what has become of the little boy George. Come *alone* to-morrow morning to the old oak in Brendon wood, and you shall be duly informed. Mind, come *alone*: if you attempt to bring one or more with you, it will be simply lost labour, for then there will be no one to meet you. You have nothing to fear as to any harm to your own person, or interference with your liberty."

There was no signature to the letter, either of name or initials. Amos was sorely puzzled what to do when he had read this strange epistle. Of course it was plain that the writer could put him in the way of recovering little George if he would; but, then, where was Brendon wood? and how was he to get to it on the following morning? And yet, if he did not act upon this letter and follow its directions, the child might be lost to him for ever, and that he could not bear to think of. The nearest town to the finger-post was yet some five miles distant; and should he reach that, and make his inquiries about the wood with success, it would be difficult for him to return home the same evening by any reasonable hour. Still, he could not find it in his heart to abandon the search, and he therefore made the best of his way to the little town of Redbury.

As he was giving up his pony to the care of the hostler at the Wheatsheaf, the principal inn in the place, he observed a man—tall, with long beard, and very dark eyes—stepping down into the inn-yard, who, as soon as he saw Amos, immediately retreated into the house. Had Amos seen him before? Never, as far as he knew; and yet a strange suspicion came over him that

this was the man who had enticed little George away, and was also the writer of the pencilled letter. Still, it might not be so; he had no proof of it; and how was he to ascertain if it was the case or no? He lingered about the yard for a time, but the stranger did not again make his appearance; so he strolled out into the town, and ascertained that Brendon wood was about two miles from Redbury, and had an old oak in the centre of it. Turning matters over in his mind, he at last came to the not very comfortable conclusion that, as the evening was now far advanced, his best course was to put up for the night in the little town, and betake himself to the wood at an early hour next day. Grieved as he was to give his friends at home anxiety by not returning that night, he felt that, if his object was to be attained, he had better remain where he was; and he was sure that his aunt would believe that he would not absent himself without good reason, and would do her best to allay in his father any undue anxiety on his account. Having come to this conclusion, he returned to the Wheatsheaf and secured a bed, and then passed the rest of the evening in the coffee-room, watching very carefully to see if he could catch anywhere another glimpse of the mysterious stranger, but to no purpose.

After a restless and anxious night he rose early; and, after commending himself and his cause to God in earnest prayer, set off, after a hasty breakfast, in the direction given him as leading to the place of appointment. It was a glorious summer day; and as he rode briskly along the country road, out of which he soon turned into a long lane skirted on either side by noble trees, he could not help sighing to think how man's sin had brought discord and deformity into a world which might otherwise have been so full of beauty. The wood soon appeared in sight, and as lonely as well as lovely a spot it was. Many bridle-roads intersected it; he chose one which seemed to lead into the centre, and in a short time the great oak was visible. There was no mistaking the venerable forest giant, with its rugged fantastic limbs towering high above the neighbouring trees. So he made straight for it at once. Amos was no coward, though naturally of a timid disposition; for he had patiently acquired habits of self-control, learned partly in the school of chastisement, and partly in the school of self-discipline. And yet it was not without a feeling of shrinking and misgiving that he saw a man approaching the oak from a path opposite to that by which he himself had come. Trees, mingled with thick brushwood, covered the ground on all sides, except where the roads and bridle-paths ran, and not a creature had he met before since he turned out of the main road. Little time, however, was allowed him for further reflection; in a minute

more he was joined by the other traveller. A single glance was sufficient to satisfy him that he had before him the same man who had attracted his attention the evening before at the Wheatsheaf.

The stranger was, as has been said, tall, and wore a long beard. On the present occasion he was wrapped in an ample cloak, and had on his head a high-crowned hat encircled with a feather. Amos could not make him out;—what was he? As they came close up to one another, the stranger saluted Amos with an air of mingled ease and affectation, and motioned him to a seat when he had dismounted from his pony. So Amos, still holding Prince's bridle in his hand, placed himself on a grassy mound near the base of the old oak, while the other seated himself a few paces from him. Neither spoke for a little while; then the stranger broke the silence. His voice was not, in its natural tones, otherwise than pleasing; but there was an assumption in his manner of speaking and a spice of sarcastic swagger which grated very painfully on the sensibilities of his companion. However, it was pretty evident that the stranger had no particular care to spare the feelings of the person whom he was addressing.

"I may as well explain at once, Mr Huntingdon," he began, "how I came to communicate with you in a way somewhat uncommon. The fact is, that I have reasons for not wishing to make myself known more than I can help to the good people in these parts. Now, had I sent you my note by the hand of any messenger, this would have drawn attention to myself, and might have led to inquiries about me which are not just now convenient. I was quite sure that yourself, or some one belonging to you, would be searching up and down the lanes for the little boy, and that his silk handkerchief, placed where I put it, would attract notice, and the note tied up in it be conveyed to yourself without my appearing personally on the scene. And so it has turned out. You have read my note, I see; and no one has been in communication with the writer but yourself. This is as it should be. And now, may I ask, do you know me? or at any rate, do you guess who I am? for we have not seen each other, I believe, before yesterday evening."

"I do not know your name," replied Amos sadly; "but I cannot say that I have no suspicion as to who you are."

"Exactly so," replied the other; "I am, in fact, none other than your brother-in-law, or, if you like it better, your sister Julia's husband."

"I have feared so," replied Amos.

"Feared!" exclaimed his companion in a tone of displeasure. "Well, be it so. I am aware that our marriage was not to the taste of the Huntingdons, so we have kept out of the way of the family as much as possible; and, indeed, I believe that your father has never even known the name of his daughter's husband, but simply the fact of her marriage."

"I believe so," said Amos; "at any rate, all that has been known by the family generally has been that she married"—here he hesitated; but the other immediately added,—

"Beneath her, you would say. Be it so, again. Well, you may as well know my name yourself, at any rate, for convenience' sake. It is, at your service, Orlando Vivian. Shall I go on?"

"If you please."

"You are aware, then, of course, that I deserted your sister, as it is called, for a time; the fact being, that we discovered after marriage that our tastes and habits of thought were very dissimilar, and that we should be happier apart, at least for a season. And in the meantime you stepped in, and have acted very nobly, I must say, in taking charge of my two little children, for which I must tender you my best thanks."

There was a brief pause, and then Amos inquired anxiously, "Is it your intention to take the children from me?"

"Well, not necessarily, but perhaps so; certainly not the girl, at present, unless you yourself wish it."

"And the boy?" asked Amos.

"Ah, I have not quite made up my mind about him," was the reply. "It may be that I shall keep him with me, and bring him up to my own profession."

"And what may that profession be?" asked the other.

"The stage," was the reply.

"What!" exclaimed Amos in a tone of horror, "bring up the poor child to be an actor! Why, it will be his ruin, body and soul!"

"And if so, Mr Huntingdon," said the other sternly and bitterly, and with his dark eyes glaring fiercely, "I suppose I, as his

father, have a right to bring him up as I please. The father's profession is, I imagine, notwithstanding your disparaging remarks, good enough for the son."

Amos leaned his head on his hand for a while without reply; then he looked his companion steadily in the face, and said, "And is there no other course open?"

"Why, yes. To be frank with you, Mr Huntingdon, there is; and, without any more beating about the bush, I will come to the point at once. The fact is, I want money, and—not an uncommon thing in this not over agreeable or accommodating world—don't know where to get it. I have, therefore, just this to say,—if you will pledge me your word to send me a cheque for fifty pounds as soon as you get home, I, on my part, will at once deliver up little George to you; and will pledge my word, as a man of honour, not again to interfere with either of the children. You may think what you please of me, but such is my proposal."

These words were uttered in a tone of the most imperturbable self-possession, and perfectly staggered poor Amos by their amazing effrontery. But all was now plain enough to him. This needy adventurer, who had entangled poor Julia in his cruel meshes, and had deserted her for a time, was hard up for money; and, having found out that Amos had taken upon himself to provide for his children at present, had hit upon the scheme of withdrawing one of them from the cottage, as a way of extorting money from his brother-in-law. It was also pretty clear that he was afraid to show himself openly, lest the officers of justice should lay hold of him and bring him to trial for some breach of the law. He had, therefore, betaken himself to the expedient of hanging up the little boy's handkerchief on the way-post, being sure that persons would be out immediately in all directions searching for the child, and that some one of them would light upon the handkerchief with the letter in it, and would forward it to Amos without delay, as the young man would be sure to be informed of the loss as soon as the nurse discovered it, and would lose no time in making personally search for the missing child; and thus the writer's purpose would be answered without his having given any clue by which himself could be discovered and brought into trouble. All this was now plainly unfolded to Amos. And what was he to do? That the man before him was utterly selfish and unscrupulous, he had no doubt, and little good, he feared, could be done by appealing to the conscience or better feelings of one who could act deliberately as he had done. Was he, then, to leave his little

nephew in his father's hands, to be brought up to the stage—or, in other words, to certain ruin under the training of such a man? The thought was not to be endured. No, he must make the sacrifice.

While these things were passing through his mind, his companion looked about him with cool indifference, kicking the leaves and sticks at his feet, and whistling in a low tone some operatic air. Then he broke silence. "Which is it to be, Mr Huntingdon?" he asked. "Am I to keep little George, or do you wish to have him back again? You know the conditions; and you may be sure that I should not have taken the trouble to meet you here if I had any thoughts of changing my mind."

Amos looked sadly and kindly at him, and then said, "And can you really, Mr Vivian, justify this conduct of yours to yourself? Can you feel really happy in the course you are pursuing? Oh! will you not let me persuade you—for my poor sister's sake, for your own sake—to leave your present mode of life, and to seek your happiness in the only path which God can bless? I would gladly help you in any way I could—"

But here his companion broke in, scorn on his lip, and a fierce malignant anger glaring from his eyes. "Stop, stop, Mr Huntingdon! enough of that. We are not come here for a preaching or a prayer-meeting. The die has long since been cast, and the Rubicon crossed. You can take your course; I will take mine. If you have nothing more agreeable to say to me, we had better each go our own way, and leave matters as they are."

"No," said Amos, firmly but sorrowfully; "it shall not be so. I promise that you shall have my cheque for fifty pounds when you have placed little George in my hands, and on the understanding that you pledge your word, as a man of honour, to leave the children with me unmolested."

"Exactly so," replied the other; "and now, as a little matter of business, I shall be obliged by your making out the cheque to 'John Smith or Bearer,'—that, certainly, will tell no tales."

"And where shall I send it to meet you? to what address?"

"To no address at all, if you please. I will be myself at the spot where the four lanes meet near your house, to the north of the Manor; it is about a quarter of a mile from you. Of course you know the place well. I will be there at five o'clock to-morrow morning, before the general world is astir. You can either meet

me there yourself, or send some trusty person who is sure not to know me. I need hardly say that any attempt to surprise or lay violent hands on me on that occasion would be fruitless, as I should be well on my guard; and, further, should there be any foul play of any kind, you may depend upon my removing *both* my children from your cottage at the earliest opportunity."

"I understand you," said Amos, "and will send my father's old butler to take you the cheque at the hour and to the place you name. The old man will ask no questions; he will be satisfied to do just what I tell him, neither more nor less. You will easily recognise him, as he has snowy-white hair, and he will be riding on this pony of mine."

"So far so good," said the other; "I have no doubt you will keep your word. And now as to the boy. You will find him at the finger-post on which his silk handkerchief was tied, at two o'clock this afternoon; that is to say, if you come alone, and are there punctually." Then he rose, and, stretching himself to his full height, saluted Amos with a bow of exaggerated ceremoniousness, and, turning on his heel, was soon hidden from view by the trees of the wood.

Sadly and slowly Amos made his way back to the market-town, his thoughts, as he rode along, being far from pleasant companions. What was to be the end of all this? Could he have done differently? No. He was satisfied that duty plainly called him to the sacrifice which he had made. He would have reproached himself bitterly had he lost the opportunity of recovering his little nephew from such a father. He had no doubt, then, taken one right step; the next he must leave to the same heavenly guidance which never had misled nor could mislead him. So having waited in the town till he had refreshed himself with a mid-day meal, he made his way back along the roads he had travelled the day before, and in due time arrived in sight of the finger-post, and of the child who was sitting alone beneath it, his little head buried in his lap, till, roused by the sound of the pony's feet, he looked up, and with a joyful cry ran to meet his uncle. Another moment, and Amos had sprung from his saddle and was clasping the sobbing, laughing child to his heart.

"O dear, dear Uncle Amos!" cried the little boy; "how good it is of God to send you for me. Oh, don't let the tall, ugly, cruel man take me away again."



"Not if I can help it, dear child," said his uncle. "There now, jump up, Georgie," he added; "we shall soon be at home again."

As he was in the act of remounting, having placed the child on the front of the saddle, he thought he heard a rustling in the hedge behind the post, and that he saw the glancing of a dark body through the trees beyond the hedge. However, that mattered not; in a very little time, having put his pony to a brisk canter, he reached the cottage, and received a hearty welcome from the nurse, and also from old Harry, whose presence at the house he was not surprised at, when he remembered that his brother Walter would no doubt have directed the old man to seek for him there. But now he began to see that Harry had become acquainted, in a measure, with his secret; for the nurse called him aside into another room soon after his return, and told him of the old servant's emotion at the sight of the little girl, and of his recognising in her the child of his master's daughter.

Amos was at first considerably disturbed at the old man's having made this discovery. Then, by degrees, the conviction grew upon him that this very discovery might be an important step in the direction of carrying out the work he had set himself to do. Surely it had been permitted for that end; and here was one who would become a helper to him in the attainment of his purpose. So, after having pondered over the matter, as he walked backwards and forwards in the little garden for some half-hour or more, he called Harry out to him, and took him into his confidence.

"Harry," he began, "can you keep a secret?"

"Well, Master Amos, that depends upon what sort of a secret it is, and who tells it me. Some folks give you secrets to keep which everybody knows, so that they're gone afore you gets 'em. But if *you've* got a secret for me to keep, you may depend upon it no one shall get it from me."

"Just so, Harry. Then I have a secret which I want you to keep for me—or, perhaps, I had better say that I have something which I should like to tell you, because I believe you may be able to help me in an important matter. And instead of binding you to keep my secret, I shall just leave it to your own good sense to say nothing about the matter till the right time comes; and I am sure, when you know all, you will have no wish to make my business a subject of conversation in the family, nor of idle gossip out of it."

"You're right there, sir," was the old butler's hearty reply; "you may trust me. I've too much respect for the family to go about like a sieve, shaking such things as I've a notion you're a-going to speak to me about all up and down the country, for every idle man, woman, and child to be wagging their tongues about them."

"Well then, Harry," continued his young master, "I shall count upon your discretion as to silence, and on your help, where you can be of use to me."

"They're both at your service, Mr Amos."

"Then I shall speak openly to you, and without any reserve. I need hardly remind you of the sad beginning of our family troubles. You will remember too well how my poor sister left her home, and married secretly a man altogether beneath her. You know how terribly my poor father was cut up by that marriage, and how he closed the door of our home against Miss Julia, as I must still call her to you. I am not blaming him nor excusing her, but just referring to the facts themselves. I never knew till to-day who or what my poor sister's husband was. I never dared mention the subject to my father, especially after my dear mother had to leave us; but ever since they were gone from us I have had it on my heart to make it the great business of my life to get them back again. I know it can be done, and I believe, with God's help, it will be done. I have found out to-day that my poor sister's husband is an actor, evidently a thoroughly unprincipled man. She went about with him from one place to another for a while; then he deserted her, before the children were old enough to know him as their father; and about a year ago I got a letter from her, telling me that she was left in a miserable lodging with two little children, and must starve unless somebody helped her. I went to see her, and found her mixed up with a number of her husband's stage acquaintances, from whom she seemed unable to free herself. So I promised to supply her with what would keep her from want till her husband should return to her; and got her to let me have her two children, whom she was quite unable to feed and clothe, and who would soon be ruined, I saw, if they were left with their poor mother as she then was, and with such people about her as friends or acquaintances. So I brought the children here, and have put them under the charge of good Mrs Williams, who knows all about them; and since then I have been just watching and waiting to see how the Lord would guide me, and have been content to move as he directs me, one step at a time. But yesterday I got a sad check. The father of the

children enticed away his little boy, and got me to meet him this morning some miles away from here. He cared nothing for the child, but only took him away that he might get some money out of me. So, when we met this morning, he engaged to give me back the child if I would promise to send him a sum of money which he named; and if I would not do so, then he said he would keep the boy, and bring him up as a stage-player. That I would not hear of; so I promised him the money, and he has given me back the little boy as you see, and has solemnly undertaken not to meddle with either of the children again. And now I want you to take the money for me when we get home. He is to be at the four turnings above the Manor-house at five o'clock to-morrow morning, and I am to send him a cheque in an envelope. This I have promised, and I want your help in the matter. You understand, Harry, how things are?—they are black enough just now, I grant, but they might be blacker."

The old man, who had listened with breathless interest, now stood still and looked his young master steadily in the face, while two or three big tears rolled down his cheeks.

"And so you've been a-sacrificing yourself, Master Amos, for your sister and her dear children," he said. "I see it all; but shouldn't I just like to have fast hold of that rascal's neck with one hand, and a good stout horsewhip in the other. But I suppose it's no use wishing for such things. Well, I'm your man, sir, as far as I can be of any service. But as for him and his promises, what are they worth? Why, he'll be just squeezing you as dry as an old sponge as has been lying for a month in a dust-pan. He'll never keep his word, not he, while there's a penny to be got out of you. And yet, I suppose, you couldn't have done different for the sake of the poor children, bless their little hearts. And I'm to take the money to him? Yes; and a policeman or two at the same time would be best. But no, I suppose not, as you've promised, and for the credit of the family. Well, it's a shocking bad business altogether; but when a man's been and tackled it as you've done, Master Amos, it'll come right in the end, there's no doubt of it."

"Thank you, Harry, a thousand times," said the other; "and I am sure you shall see the wisdom of keeping quiet on the subject for the sake of the family."

"You're safe there with me, Master Amos," was the old man's reply.

So, when Amos and Harry returned to Flixworth Manor, the young man explained to his father that the little child at the

cottage, in whom he was interested, had been enticed away by a stranger, and that he had been unable to recover him till that morning, and had, in his search for the child, been obliged to spend the previous night at the market-town. Mr Huntingdon, who was just then very fully occupied in planning and carrying out some improvements on his estate, was satisfied with this explanation. So the subject was not further discussed in the family. On the morning after his return, Amos duly conveyed the cheque, through Harry, to his brother-in-law.

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## **Chapter Eight.**

### **Bearing the Cross.**

Walter's good intentions and resolutions respecting his treatment of his brother, though sincere when he uttered them in the presence of his aunt, were by no means strong enough to make him curb his wit or his displeasure when Amos did anything to annoy or thwart him. And not only so; but there abode in his mind a feeling of mingled jealousy and annoyance when he was constrained to admit to himself his brother's superiority. If Amos had some self-imposed duty to perform, why should he thrust this duty into other people's faces? Duty was a very fine thing in its way, no doubt, but grave Mr Duty was a very sour-tempered, troublesome old fellow when he trode on his neighbour's toes. And why should Amos make himself disagreeable by adopting a course of duty which unfitted him for cordially co-operating with his younger brother in his schemes? There was a sort of monasticism in this conduct in Walter's eyes. Here was his brother living amongst them, and yet, having taken the vows of some self-imposed duty upon him, he was looking down upon them all as though from some higher standing-ground. What a pity that he did not retire into a monastery, where he could act out his vows and his duty without troubling the noses of ordinary mortals like his relations with this oppressive "odour of sanctity." So thought Walter; and he made no concealment of his feelings from Amos, whom he now began to call "the Monk," or "Father Gengulphus."

Amos took it all very quietly, fully understanding that Walter was vexed with him for pursuing a path alone, along which his brother neither could nor would follow him at present. He was content that it should be so, and bore the cross patiently, being willing to bide his time, thankful to notice in Walter a kindlier feeling towards himself on the whole, and convinced that, in the

end, his own motives and work would be duly appreciated by that brother whom he sincerely loved.

Miss Huntingdon saw what was going on, and rejoiced. She knew well that the discipline would only tend to brighten the character of her elder nephew, and felt sure that Walter would learn by degrees fully to understand and value his brother. Meanwhile, she was ever ready to throw in a little oil when the waters were more than usually troubled. She knew, too, the strength of Amos's religious character, and the weakness of any higher or holier principles in Walter's heart; and she was sure that the steady consistency of her elder nephew would gradually win on the generous heart of his brother, spite of himself.

Nothing special had occurred to spoil the harmony of feeling between Amos and Walter for some weeks after the unexpected absence of the former from home; so that the hearts of the brothers were really being drawn closer together, notwithstanding natural dissimilarity of disposition, and the absence in Walter of that high principle and self-discipline which were moulding his elder brother's character into daily nearer conformity to Him who is the one only perfect pattern of humanity.

It was while Walter was thus increasingly becoming sensible of the superior beauty of his brother's sterling worth and consistency, and was at the same time secretly resenting the pressure of that nobler life's influence upon him, being unprepared to follow it out himself and submit to its gentle restraints and self-denial, that a party of friends was assembled at dinner one summer evening at the Manor-house. Mr Huntingdon did not give dinner-parties now as frequently as in happier days, and his friends and neighbours understood and appreciated the cause; but now and then he felt it to be his duty to entertain his friends in the old way; so, on the present occasion, some thirty guests sat down to table.

Among those present were an old Mrs Morse, a widow lady, and her daughter. The mother was a kind-hearted woman of the world, reasonably well-to-do, and visited by all the good families in the neighbourhood. She was very anxious to see her daughter, who was her only child, and was now passing out of her youthful days, well married, as the world esteems it; so she was very glad of an opportunity of drawing out Amos Huntingdon, whom she looked upon as a worthy, weak, shy, dull young man, rather depressed by his discouraging home surroundings, and not a likely person to attract or seek the affections of any young lady who might be fortunate enough to

combine the allurements of wealth and beauty. He might, however, with a little judicious management, be led to look with interest on her daughter, and would prove, no doubt, an excellent husband, as he had means of his own, the prospect of inheriting the Manor, and was exceedingly amiable, and free from habits of extravagance. Gladly, therefore, did she avail herself of the present opportunity to engage Amos in conversation before dinner was announced, expressing, at the same time, her regret that she had so seldom the pleasure of meeting him, and how much it would gratify herself and her daughter if he would come over now and then and spend a quiet afternoon or evening with them. "You know," she continued, "we are quiet people, and, if report says true, Mr Amos, your own tastes and habits are of the quiet sort. We should be so glad to see you in our simple way; and I think we could show you, in the beauties of our charming neighbourhood, what would really be a pleasure to you and a refreshment to your mind."

Amos thanked her, and listened with due decorum to a good deal of small talk on the old lady's part till dinner was announced, when she so contrived that he should take her daughter down and sit between them.

Walter was seated just opposite his brother, full of life and fun, as he threw off his gay remarks now on this side and now on that. Suddenly he looked across at Amos, and something in the situation of his brother between the old lady and her daughter struck him as so irresistibly funny, that it was with the utmost difficulty that he restrained himself from a violent outburst of laughter. And, certainly, to one easily moved to merriment there was something singularly quaint and almost comic in the contrast between the subdued but courteous manner of Amos, who was patiently endeavouring to make himself agreeable to his two immediate neighbours, and the excited frivolity of Miss Morse's running fire of worldly commonplaces, occasionally interrupted by her mother's more staid utterances of a similar character.

Walter thoroughly comprehended the situation, and the reason why such pains were being taken to draw out his brother; and his satisfaction and amusement were unbounded at the manifest failure of the effort. The old lady caught Walter's eye, and divining somewhat of the cause of its merry twinkle, coloured, and was silent. Her daughter also looked uneasily across the table, and then exclaimed,—

"Were you at Lady Gambit's garden-party last Tuesday, Mr Walter?"

"No," he replied; "I was not there."

"Then I can tell you that you missed a treat," said the other.

"Why, what was the special attraction?" he asked.

"Oh, everything that you can imagine!"

"Well, I can imagine so many things," said Walter laughing, "that I am quite sure her ladyship's garden could never have held them all. Pray, tell me what you yourself thought *the* attraction *par excellence*."

"Yes, I can do that. You know these garden-parties are generally rather dull affairs after all."

"What! with those numberless attractions?"

"Yes; one gets weary of them. You know, go where you will, it's the same thing over and over again."

"But it seems that it was not so in this case."

"No, it was not. Her ladyship, no doubt, wished to make a little variety, and so she was good enough to provide us with something new."

"Dear me!" cried Walter; "how I should have liked being there! What was the novelty? Was it a temperance lecture, or a Band of Hope meeting for the benefit of the old boys and girls of sixty or seventy years of age? That must have been very lively. Or perhaps it was a Protestant address against nunneries and monasteries. My brother Amos would have liked to have had a word on that subject."

"No, no, Mr Walter; you must not be foolish."

"Well, do tell me. I am all anxiety to know what this attractive novelty was. Not a conjurer? that would have been capital fun."

"No, not a conjurer exactly."

"Well, then, something of the sort?"

"Yes; Lady Gambit had engaged a celebrated mimic—a man, I mean, who can take off other people to the life."

"Indeed," said Walter. "Perhaps it might have been as well if he had taken himself off. But, excuse my nonsense; what did he mimic?"

"Oh, all sorts of funny people. We all gathered round him under the great sycamore tree, and he kept us in peals of laughter for an hour."

"Tell me, please, some of the characters he took off."

"I can remember two especially. One of them was a drunkard, and the other was a hypocrite. In taking off the drunkard he called himself 'Mr Adolphus Swillerly.' You never heard anything more amusing in your life."

"And the hypocrite?" asked Walter, but with less of amusement in his tone.

"Ah, I think that was better still! He assumed the character of 'Simon Batter-text;' and he mimicked his preaching, and his praying, and his sighs, and his 'ahmens' in a wonderful way. It really was perfect. I'm so sorry you were not there, you would have so thoroughly enjoyed it."

There was a pause, and a general silence, for the attention of the rest of the company had been drawn to the subject and the speakers.

"Surely you don't see any harm in a little fun like that?" asked the young lady in some dismay, as she noticed that Walter's face and manner were troubled as he hesitated in his reply.

All eyes were on him. What should he say? He turned very red; and then, having helped himself to a glass of wine, he said, carelessly, and with a short, merry laugh, "Harm! oh, of course not! The man meant no harm; he didn't attack individuals. All the better if he made drunkenness and hypocrisy ridiculous.—Don't you think so, Amos?"

For a moment his brother hesitated, for every eye was directed towards him. No one spoke; not a knife nor fork clattered.

"Well, my boy," said his father, "let us have your opinion."



Thus appealed to, Amos no longer hesitated, but said calmly, and in a low distinct voice, heard by every one at the table, "I had rather not have given my opinion; but, when I am thus openly appealed to, I must not shrink from expressing it. I think it wrong, utterly wrong, to ridicule sin in any shape or form. To put sin in a funny light is not the way to make us hate it as we ought to do. Our Saviour never made light or a jest of sin; and I believe that the man who mimicked a drunkard and a hypocritical preacher had no love for either sobriety or holiness."

The profoundest silence reigned while Amos uttered these words. At first his voice had trembled, but it immediately became perfectly firm, and a quiet peace rested on his sweet face as he finished. A sudden chill seemed to have fallen on most of the party. Some shrugged their shoulders, some smiled, others looked annoyed. Mrs Morse and her daughter exchanged looks of bewilderment behind Amos's back. Walter, with feelings of mingled shame and vexation, glanced at the bright face of his aunt, whose eyes swam with grateful tears. Then he glanced down: her hands were crossed; yes, he knew that it would be so. And how felt Mr Huntingdon? To the surprise of all, and of none more than Amos himself, he exclaimed, "That's right, Amos; you've spoken out like a man, and I believe you are right."

For a while there was silence; then a gentleman near the squire's end of the table asked his next neighbour, "What sort of a looking man was this same mimic? I believe you were at Lady Gambit's."

"Yes, I was there," replied the other. "I can't say much in his favour. He was not a bad-looking fellow,—black hair, if it was his own, black piercing eyes, and a black beard. I can't imagine where her ladyship picked him up."

"But *I* can," said a gentleman opposite. "He is some strolling player. He got, it would seem, access to Lady Gambit's ear in some underhand way; and he has done now what our young friend Walter suggested a little while ago that he might as well have done sooner. Having taken other people off, he has taken himself off also, and has contrived to carry some twenty pounds of her ladyship's money with him, which he managed to swindle her out of; and the police are on the look-out for him. I heard that only this morning from the sergeant himself."

Poor Amos! how terribly his heart sank within him when he heard these words! Yes; he could have little doubt about it. This

mimic and swindler, he felt assured, was none other than his own brother-in-law. Happily, however, he was pretty sure to be now out of the neighbourhood, and was not likely to show himself soon again. But what of his unhappy wife? Alas! Amos dreaded to think what the unprincipled man might do with or against her.

Glad, heartily glad, were both the brothers when the dinner was over, and the rest of the evening, after "dragging its slow length along," had at last come to an end. Walter, indeed, rattled away in the drawing-room to every one's content but his own. Still, a chill had fallen on more than one of the party; and as for poor Mrs Morse and her daughter, after endeavouring to make themselves agreeable by gusts which were followed by portentous lulls, they were glad to order their carriage and take their departure at the earliest hour consistent with politeness.

And now, when all the guests had taken leave, and Miss Huntingdon had retired to her room, happy in the prospect of coming rest, she heard a sort of half scuffle at her door, followed by a knock. Then in came Walter, dragging in some one after him who was evidently reluctant to be thus introduced. "Can you, oh, can you, dear aunt, spare me—ay, spare *us*,—that means me and Amos, or, rather, it ought to be Amos and me,—just a few minutes? Amos doesn't want to come, just like his unselfish self, but I do. No, I don't want to tire you after all your fatigues, but I can't go to sleep till I have had a word from you. If you don't let me stop, if you don't say that word, I shall lie awake all night, thinking of those hands—not *cross*, for their owner is never cross, but *crossed*—those crossed hands. Or if I do go to sleep, I shall do nothing but dream of them. So pray let me stop; and Amos must stop too."

The permission to remain having been cheerfully granted, Walter hauled his brother into a chair, and then, stooping over him, kissed his forehead. Then he flung himself on his knees and looked up wistfully into Miss Huntingdon's face. Oh, how entirely did she forget all weariness, as she marked the effect that Walter's kiss had on his brother; how it brought tears from those eyes which had long known little of weeping except for sorrow.

"Well, dear boy," she said, "and what would you have with me now?"

"Ah! auntie, I want those hands to talk to me, and I want Amos to hear them talk. I want you to tell us both some of your moral courage anecdotes; they will strengthen him and be a lesson to

me; for I don't want you to tell me this time that I was wrong. There sits the brave man, here kneels the coward."

"Dear, dear boy," was Miss Huntingdon's reply, with a warm embrace, "yes; what you say is true. It *did* require true moral courage to speak up as Amos did, at such a time and before so many; and we have some noble instances on record of such a courage under somewhat similar circumstances, and these show us that conduct like this will force respect, let the world say and think what it pleases. I have two or three heroes to bring forward on this topic, but I must be brief, as the hour is late.

"You remember Frederick the Great, as he was called. Alas! he was great in infidelity as well as in war; and he delighted to gather round him those who shared in the same unbelieving views. God and his truth were subjects of ridicule with them; and a bold man indeed would he be who would venture to say in their presence a word in favour of the gospel or of respect for its divine Author. But there was such a one amongst those who had the privilege of sitting at the king's table; an old grey-headed man of rank, who had fought his country's battles nobly, and whose wise counsels in state affairs were highly prized by his sovereign. He was dining one day at the palace, and saw all round him none but those who made a mock of sin and religion. The conversation flowed freely, and the smart jests of Frederick called forth similar flashes of wit from his different guests. The subject of Christianity soon came up, and was immediately handled in the most profane and bitter style by the king and those around him. No wit is so cheap as profane wit; for the devil seems to give a special facility of sarcasm to those who attack God's truth; and, besides that, there seems nothing which ungodly men relish so much, for giving point to their blasphemies, as Scripture facts or words misquoted, misapplied, or parodied. So the gospel and its Founder were bandied from tongue to tongue as a theme for unholy mirth. But presently there was a pause and a dead silence; for the grey-headed old soldier, who had sat perfectly silent and deeply pained, as he listened to the unhallowed talk of his companions, rose to his feet, his face flushed, and his hoary head bowed down. What was coming now?

"May it please your majesty," the old man began, while the tears ran down his cheeks, and his voice was troubled, "I have always, as I am sure you will acknowledge, behaved with due respect to your majesty whenever in your majesty's presence; nor can any one here say that he has ever heard me speak evil of your majesty behind your back. Your majesty knows, also,

that I have endeavoured to serve you faithfully on the field and in the council-chamber. You must therefore bear with me while I say that I cannot sit patiently by and hear your majesty join with your friends in speaking evil of the dearest friend I have, one dearer to me than my life, and whom I must hold in greater honour than even your majesty. I mean my Saviour and heavenly King, the Lord Jesus Christ. Pardon me, therefore, your majesty, if I ask leave to withdraw at once.'

"Just imagine, dear boys, such a speech in such a company, for to such effect were the words spoken by that noble old soldier of the Cross. Ah! it is comparatively easy to stand up for the truth in our day and country, because religion is now universally respected by all people of good sense and refinement, even by those who do not follow it; and anything like an open attack upon Christianity, in a mixed company, would be frowned upon by society as being ungentlemanly and in bad taste. But it was not so in Frederick's court, where a profession of infidel opinions was almost held to be an essential in one who would make any pretension to intellectual acuteness. And the old officer knew this well. He knew the scorn which would glare upon him from the eyes of the other guests. He expected nothing but sneering pity, where such sentiments as his own could not be visited with a severer penalty. But he did not hang back through fear of man. He could say, as David says in the Psalms, 'I will speak of thy testimonies even before kings, and will not be ashamed.' Was he not a true moral hero, dear Walter?"

"An out-and-out one, dear aunt," was his reply. "But what did the king say to this?"

"The king behaved on this occasion like a king and a man. Poor king, he was not without a heart that could, at times, feel as it ought to do. He at once turned to the faithful old servant of the great Master, and, checking all attempts at ridicule or retort in the other guests, assured him that he thoroughly respected and appreciated his feelings and motives and his present conduct, and that never again would he himself say anything against the old man's faith nor his Saviour while he was by, nor would he suffer any who might be with him to do so."

"Hip, hip, hurrah!" said Walter. "The old man got the best of it after all; and so will my brother Amos here, spite of his having such an unworthy coward of a brother as poor Walter. But you have another example for us, auntie; nothing like knocking the nail on the head. I feel better already, and mean to be a perfect moral lion for bravery in future; at least I hope so."

"I hope so too, Walter," said his aunt with a smile. "I will give you, then, one other instance of the same sort of moral courage, but taken from quite a different country, and occurring in our own days; and then I think we shall have had lessons enough for to-night. My hero this time is an American, and a young man too.

"You will have heard of the remarkable revival which took place in that country, I mean in the United States, some few years since. Of course, at such seasons there will be a mixture of good and evil. Not all who make a profession will stand firm; while those who have been merely carried along by the current of excitement will return at last to the world, from which they have never really separated themselves, when the excitement has passed away. But, indeed, a great and lasting work for God was accomplished in that revival, and the young man I am speaking about was one of the fruits of it.

"He had been living a very gay and thoughtless life. I am not sure that he had been indulging in any openly sinful practices; but, at any rate, he had been giving himself up wholly to the pursuit of this world. He was in a good social position, and possessed of abundant means. Moreover, he had received a good education, so far as mere learning went, and was of pleasing and popular manners. The last thing he would have thought of would have been turning a Christian. But God, whose thoughts are not as our thoughts, had better things in store for him. The revival wave swept over the neighbourhood where he was, and carried him along with it. His heart, his views, his aims were all really changed; he was, indeed and in truth, a new creature. And now he felt that he must not hide his colours, he must nail them to the mast, or, rather, he must wrap them round him that, go where he might, every one might see them. His was that thorough-going, energetic, outspoken disposition which has accomplished such marvellous earthly things through so many of his fellow-countrymen. He was not the person to do anything by halves.

"Before his conversion, himself and several other young men, of like tastes and habits, used to meet weekly at one another's houses, in turn, for card-playing and carousing; and at these meetings he used to be the very life of the party, the gayest of the gay. But what should he do now? It would be no easy matter to confess to his young associates the change that had taken place in his heart. What would they think and say? Perhaps he might let it get known by degrees, and then he could just absent himself from the old gatherings, and merely

drop out of a society no longer congenial to him. This would save him a great deal of shame and reproach. Would not this be as much as could be reasonably expected of him, and sufficient to show his sincerity and consistency? It might have satisfied ordinary characters, but it did not satisfy him. He wanted to be doing something at once for the Master, and to begin with those very young men who had been his companions in sin. So he sent round his printed invitations to every one of them to a gathering in his own house. Such had been the custom with all the members of their fraternity. But this time the invitation was no longer to 'Tea and Cards,' but to 'Tea and Prayer.' It was, indeed, a bold stroke, but it was not the act of the moment from mere impulse or excitement.

"The day of meeting came. A few of his old acquaintances arrived, some, it may be, out of curiosity, or supposing that the 'Prayer' was only a joke. But none were left in doubt. Plainly, lovingly, faithfully, he set before them how the change had been wrought in himself, and how happy it had made him; and then he affectionately urged them all to take the same course as he had done. And I believe that his noble and courageous dealing was not in vain. Am I wrong, Walter, in classing that young American gentleman among my moral heroes?"

"No, dear aunt, certainly not," replied her nephew thoughtfully. "I think he deserves a foremost place;—don't you, Amos?"

"Yes," replied his brother; "he reminds me of the greatest, perhaps, of all moral heroes—I mean, of course, among beings like ourselves. I am thinking of the apostle Paul, who changed at once from the persecutor to the preacher; gave up every earthly honour and advantage; braved the bitter scorn of his old friends; and, without hesitation, began immediately publicly to proclaim the gospel which he had before been mad to destroy."

Walter held out his hand to his brother, and the clasp was a close and mutual one; and then, hand in hand, they left their aunt, who laid her head on her pillow that night with deep thankfulness in her heart, for she saw that, spite of all drawbacks, there was a good work making progress in Walter, and that the high and holy character of the true and tried disciple of the Saviour was gaining strength and beauty in the once despised and misunderstood Amos.

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## Chapter Nine.

### **Is it genuine?**

But though Walter was learning to understand and appreciate his brother's character, and to acknowledge his superiority to himself in moral courage, he was not altogether satisfied with continuing to lie under the sense of that superiority on his brother's part. He had himself been so constantly made the object of his father's admiration and outspoken praises, and had always been so popular with all friends of the family and guests at the Manor-house, that anything like a feeling of inferiority to his brother was one which he found it very hard to allow a lodging in his heart and thoughts. So, while the generous impulse of the moment had led him to applaud and rejoice in his brother's noble moral courage, when they were discussing the matter in his aunt's room, he was by no means prepared, when that impulse had died away, to allow Amos to carry off and retain the palm which he acknowledged that he had won. Jealousy of his brother's reputation for moral courage with Miss Huntingdon was a meanness which he would have thought himself incapable of, and which he would have repudiated indignantly had he been charged with it. Nevertheless, it was there in his heart; it made him restless and dissatisfied, and kept him longing for an opportunity to display a moral courage which should shine with a light that might, even in his aunt's eyes, eclipse, or at any rate equal, that which glowed so brightly in Amos. He was therefore on the watch for such an opportunity; and before long that opportunity, as he thought, presented itself.

One morning as the squire was reading the county paper, while his sister was superintending the preparations for breakfast, and her two nephews were seated near her, Mr Huntingdon exclaimed suddenly, in a tone of angry excitement, "Why, whatever is the meaning of this? Walter, my boy, whatever does it mean?"

"What, father?" asked his son in a voice of mingled uneasiness and surprise.

"Why, just listen to this advertisement:—'I hereby challenge the working-men of this neighbourhood to a trial of skill in running, leaping, and shooting; and I promise to give a sovereign to any man who shall beat me in a mile race, a high jump, and firing at a mark. The trial to come off on Marley Heath, on Tuesday, June 8th, at four o'clock p.m.

"Signed, Walter Huntingdon, Flixworth Manor.'—Do you know anything about this, Walter? Did you really put this advertisement into the paper? or is it a disgraceful hoax?"

Poor Walter looked perfectly astounded, as did also his aunt and brother. Then he said, with some hesitation, "It is no advertisement of mine."

"No, I thought not," said his father indignantly. "It must be, then, a most shameful hoax; and I shall speak or write to the editor about it in pretty strong terms you may be sure."

"Father," said Walter sadly, and after a pause, "it is no hoax."

"No hoax! What do you mean? You said you did not put the advertisement in; so it must be a hoax."

"I will explain it," said his son in a subdued voice. "The other day, young Saunders, Gregson, and myself were discussing which of us was the best shot, and best at a race and a jump. 'Well,' said I, 'we can easily put it to the test. Let us meet to-morrow on Marley Heath and have it out.' So we brought our guns with us next day; and Saunders and Gregson brought a few other fellows with them to look on and see all fair. We three fired at a mark, and leapt over a rod hung across two poles, and tried who was best runner over a hundred yards; and I won the day in all three things. So, as we were sitting down in the little roadside inn, where we all had some eggs and bacon and bread and cheese together for lunch, Gregson said to the other fellows, 'Why, our friend Walter here might challenge the whole county.' 'That he might; and win too,' said more than one of them. 'I don't know,' I said; 'but I shouldn't mind offering a sovereign to any working-man in the neighbourhood who would beat me.' 'Good,' said Saunders; 'there's many a working-man that would like to have a try for your sovereign; and it would be capital fun to see the match come off.' 'What do you say to putting an advertisement in the county paper to that effect?' said Gregson. 'Not I,' I said; 'I shall do nothing of the sort.' 'Ah, he's backing out,' said Saunders. 'Indeed, I'm not,' I cried; 'I meant what I said.' 'Well, will you let me put the advertisement in in your name? Don't be modest, man; you're sure to win,' said Gregson. 'You can do so if you like,' I replied; 'I have no intention to go back from my word.' I said this half in joke and half in earnest, and no doubt we were all a little excited with the sport and with the lunch; but I never dreamed that Gregson was serious when he talked about putting in the advertisement in my name, and I shall not soon forgive him for getting me into such a fix. So, father, that's just all about it."



Mr Huntingdon listened to this explanation with much surprise and vexation, and then was silent.

"And what do you mean to do about it, Walter?" asked his aunt. "You surely won't let the matter go on."

"I don't see how I can help it," was her nephew's reply; "the challenge has been publicly given in my name."

"It can't be—it mustn't be," exclaimed his father angrily; "it's perfectly preposterous. We shall be the talk and the jest of the whole county. It will do harm, too, to the working-classes. Why, you'll have all the idle vagabonds there. Some light-fingered and light-heeled poacher will win your sovereign—you'll be the laughing-stock of all the country round, and so shall I too. And such a thing, instead of encouraging patient industry and sobriety, will be just the means of giving heart to the idlers and the profligates. It must not be, Walter, my boy."

His son did not reply for some time; at last he said, "I don't see how I can back out of it; I've pledged my word. I'm sorry for it, and I'm willing to take all the shame and blame to myself, and all the ridicule, if I'm beaten. You may depend upon it I won't be caught in this way again, but I must go through with it now."

"Nonsense," said his father; "I don't see that at all."

"Perhaps not, father," replied his son; "but I can't go back from what I've said." These last words were uttered with a dogged determination of tone and manner which showed that Walter had made up his mind, and was not to be turned from his purpose.

Like his father, he had a considerable share of obstinacy in his disposition, and Mr Huntingdon could call to mind several occasions on which a battle with his favourite son had ended in the boy's getting his own way. And so, thinking further remonstrance useless, at any rate for the present, he let the matter drop, hoping, as he said afterwards to his sister, that Walter would come to his senses on the matter when he had had time to think the subject over coolly. But he was mistaken in this hope. Much as Walter was annoyed at having been thus taken at his word, which he had given half in jest, he nevertheless considered that he was pledged to abide by what had been advertised in his name and with his sanction. So on the day appointed there was a considerable gathering of working-men, and also of women and children, on Marley

Heath, and this gathering swelled into a crowd as the time of trial approached.

Gregson and Saunders—who enjoyed the whole thing amazingly, and none the less because, as they had expressed it to each other as they came along, “Young Huntingdon would be none the worse fellow for getting a little of the shine and brag taken out of him”—were on the spot in good time, with several like-minded companions. These all gathered round Walter as he came on to the ground, and wished him good success, assuring him that no doubt he would keep his sovereign safe in his pocket, and come off conqueror.

Poor Walter’s reply to his friends was not particularly cordial in its tone, and made Gregson see that he must put in a word of conciliation. “Come, old fellow,” he said, “you must forgive me if I took you too literally at your word. I really thought you meant it; it will do no harm to anybody, and will only show that you’ve got the old Huntingdon pluck and spirit in you.”

“All right,” said Walter, but not very cheerily; “I’m booked now, and must make the best of it. How many are there who are going in for the trial, do you think?”

“We shall see,” said Saunders, “if we wait a bit; it wants a quarter to four, still.”

Everything was then duly arranged for the contest. A mile’s course had been previously marked out, and a shooting-butt set up, and also two poles with a leaping-rod across them. As the hour approached, several young men respectably dressed came up, and among them a powerful and active-looking fellow whose appearance was hailed by a general shout of mirth. His clothing was none of the best; his face was scarred in several places; and there was a free-and-easy manner about him, very different from that of the other competitors. He answered the loud laughter by which his appearance had been greeted with a broad grin and a profound bow of mock salutation. Each candidate for the trial had brought his gun with him, and stood prepared for the contest. Gregson and Saunders managed all the arrangements after a brief consultation with Walter.

Four o’clock had now come, and Gregson, having ascertained the fact by looking at his watch, brought the competitors forward, and informed them that the shooting would be the first thing, and that six shots would be allowed to each, the winner being of course he who should place the greatest number of marks nearest the bull’s-eye. At the same time Gregson made it

to be distinctly understood that the sovereign was only to be given to the man, if such should be found, who should beat Walter Huntingdon in all three things,—namely, in shooting, leaping, and running.

By his own request Walter came first. Whatever may have been his feelings of annoyance or reluctance up to this time, they were now completely swallowed up in the excitement of the moment and the desire to maintain the high reputation he had previously gained. So he threw his whole soul into the contest, and with steady eye and unwavering hand pointed his rifle towards the target. Bang! a cloud of smoke. Well shot! the bullet had struck the target, but not very near the centre. A second and third were equally but not more successful. The fourth struck the bull's-eye, the fifth the ring next it, and the sixth the bull's-eye again. Bravo! shouted the excited crowd; would any one beat that? Forward now came a sober-looking young man, and did his best, but this was far short of what Walter had achieved. Two others followed with no better success. Then came one who handled his gun very carefully, and took his aims with great deliberation. Three shots in the bull's-eye! here was a winner—would any one come up to him? Four more came forward, and two of these again scored three shots in the bull's-eye. And now the rough-looking man, who had excited the general mirth of the crowd on his arrival, took his stand opposite the target. He gazed at it a full minute before raising his piece. There was a derisive titter throughout the spectators as at last he did so in an awkward style, and with a queer twist of his mouth. The next moment he was rigid as a statue cut out of stone. Flash! bang! the bull's-eye; again the bull's-eye; two more very near it; twice again the bull's-eye. So he has made the best score after all. "I thought so," he cried, with a swaggering toss of his head and a jaunty whistle, and then with a flourish of his rifle high in air he strode back into the midst of the onlookers. Thus there were four of the competitors who had outdone Walter in the firing at the mark.

But the running and jumping yet remained to be contested. The jumping was arranged to come next, and the four winners in the shooting prepared to do their best against their young challenger: Walter was now thoroughly roused, and, taking off his coat, and exchanging his boots for a pair of light shoes, stepped forward to exert himself to his utmost. Higher and higher did he bound over the cross-rod as it was raised for him by his friends peg by peg. Jumping was a feat in which he specially prided himself, and loud was the applause of Gregson, Saunders, and their friends as he sprang over the rod time after

time. At last he failed to clear it, and his utmost was done. And now the previous winners came on in turn. The first who made the attempt soon gave in; he was clearly inferior to Walter in the high jump. The next surpassed him by one peg. The third equalled him. And now came forward the strange-looking man on whom all eyes were eagerly bent. He had divested himself of his coat and dirty neck-tie, and having kicked off his shoes, looked round him with a snort and a wild grimace, and then ran forward with a light, skipping step, and cleared the first stick without the slightest effort. Each succeeding height was leapt over with the same ease, till he had equalled the most successful jumper. "And now for a topper," he cried, as the rod was raised by still another peg. Throwing all his energies into the effort, with a rush and a mighty bound he cleared the stick by nearly a foot, and danced gaily back to the starting-point amidst the vociferous applause of all present. Therefore Walter had now the two to contend with in the foot-race who had surpassed him in the high jump. The interest of the crowd was now at boiling-point, and all sorts of conjectures, opinions, and affirmations were circulated as to the issue of the trial, while the three who were to run were resting a while. At length, cheered on by the sympathising shouts of the impatient spectators, they placed themselves abreast, stripped of all superfluous garments, and at a signal from Gregson the race began. Walter commenced warily, husbanding his strength, and not quickening his speed till he had reached the middle of the course; the one of the remaining two did much the same. As for the other, the wild-looking winner of the highest place in the two previous contests, he slouched along amidst peals of laughter all through the line. Nevertheless, it was soon evident that, although dropping behind a little in the first quarter of a mile, he was gradually drawing up nearer and nearer to the front. When Walter had accomplished three-fourths of his task, and was now putting on extra speed, the wild stranger, with a shout of "Victory for ever!" flung himself forward at a tremendous speed, and kept easily ahead to the end. The two remaining racers now pressed on abreast till within a yard of the place from whence they started, when, by a last vehement effort, Walter's companion came in a foot or two in advance. All flung themselves on the grass, and when the hubbub of cheers and shouts had subsided, Walter rose to his feet, and holding out a hand to each of the victors, said with a laugh, "Fairly beaten."

Gradually now the crowd began to disperse, while the little band of competitors gathered round a cart which had been brought up by Walter's direction carrying some refreshments for himself and his friends, and those who had tried skill and endurance

with him. When the provisions had been duly partaken of, Walter, taking out his purse, turned to those about him and said: "And now, to whom am I to give the sovereign, for two have beaten me?"

"Oh, to our friend here, of course," said Gregson, placing his hand on the strange-looking man's shoulder, "for he has done the best right through."

"Come forward, then, my man," said Walter; "and pray, may I ask your name?"

"Oh," said the man addressed, with a laugh, "every one knows my name—Jim Jarrocks they calls me."

"Well, Jim, here's your sovereign, and you've fairly won it."

"Thank'ee, sir," said Jim; "and so has Will Gittins here, if I'm not mistaken."

"How do you mean?" asked Saunders; "the sovereign was offered to the best man."

"Them's not the terms of the advertisement," said Jim, taking the newspaper out of his pocket. "Here it is: 'I promise to give one sovereign to any man who shall beat me in a mile race, a high jump, and firing at a mark.' Now, I've done it and won my sovereign, and Will Gittins has done it and won his sovereign too."

It was even so. Two had fairly won the prize. So Walter, not with the best grace, felt in his purse for a second sovereign, which he handed to the other winner; and the two men walked away from the place of meeting arm in arm.

"Walter," said Gregson earnestly and apologetically as they left the ground, "I never meant this nor thought of it. I can't let you be out of pocket this second sovereign; you must allow me to give it you back."

But Walter declined it, spite of earnest remonstrance and pressure on his friend's part. "No," he said; "I've got myself into a nice mess by my folly; but what I've undertaken I mean to carry out, and take my own burdens upon myself." And so, notwithstanding the applause and fine speeches showered on him by his friends, Walter returned home considerably crestfallen and out of spirits, the only thing that comforted him being a sort of half conviction that he had shown a considerable

degree of moral courage in the way in which he had stuck to and carried out his engagement.

As for Mr Huntingdon, his mortification was extreme when there appeared in the next issue of the county paper a full description of the contest, from which it appeared that his favourite son had been beaten in a public trial of skill by Jim Jarrocks, well-known all over the county as the most reckless poacher and unblushing profligate anywhere about, and had thus given encouragement to a man who was constantly before the magistrates for all sorts of minor breaches of the law. However, he felt that he must make the best of it, and he therefore spoke of it among his friends as a bit of foolish practical joking on his son's part, in which he had burned his fingers pretty severely, and which would therefore, he had no doubt, read him a lesson to avoid anything of the sort in the future.

As for Walter himself, he was only too glad to keep silent on the matter, and let it die out; and so were the family generally. There was one, however, from whom Walter looked for sympathy, and even for a measure of approbation—this was his aunt. In the evening, after the article in the county paper on his challenge and its results had been read with severe comments by his father at the breakfast-table, he found Miss Huntingdon sitting alone in the summer-house. Having cut two or three small slips off a laurel, he brought them to her, and, as he sat down by her side, said, half mournfully, half playfully, "Auntie, I want you to make me a laurel crown or chaplet of these."

"Indeed, Walter; what for?"

"That I may wear it as a reward from you, and a token of victory in moral courage."

"Well, but, my dear boy, if the laurels are to be looked at as a reward from myself, I cannot crown you till I am satisfied that you have won them."

"Exactly so, auntie; now that is just what I am going to show you."

"Do so, dear boy, and I shall be only too rejoiced to make the chaplet, and to place it with my own hands on your head."

"Well then, dear aunt, you have heard all about this wretched business of the race; you may be sure that it has made me feel very small and very foolish."

"I can quite understand that," said Miss Huntingdon; "and I have felt very sorry for you in the matter; but I hope it may turn out for good, and make you a little more cautious."

"I hope so too, auntie; but this is not the point with me just now. I want to get credit, from you at any rate, for a little bit, perhaps only a very little bit, of moral heroism or courage."

"Well, Walter?"

"Ah, now, auntie, that 'well' didn't sound well. I'm afraid I shan't get much credit or encouragement from you."

"Let me hear all about it, dear boy," said his aunt kindly.

"Why then, you see, I made a foolish offer, and might have backed out of it; and if I had done so I should have pleased my father and saved my money, and not have encouraged one of the biggest scamps going, and have been spared a lot of chaffing and ridicule. But you see I had given my word, though it was only half a word after all, for I never dreamed that Gregson would have taken me up as he did. But rather than break my word, I stood by what I had promised, and got all sorts of bother and trouble by doing so. Now, wasn't that something like moral courage? Don't I deserve my laurels?"

"It was something *like* it," replied his aunt gravely.

"Is that all, auntie? Wasn't it the thing itself? You know there has been no dash or mere impulse here. I've had a deal of patience and forbearance to exercise, and these are quite out of my line."

"Yes, I see that; but then, Walter—"

"But then, Aunt Kate, it wasn't moral courage after all."

"Do you yourself think it was, dear boy?"

"Well, I don't know; I should like to think it was, but I am almost afraid. What should you call it, dear aunt, if it wasn't truly moral courage?"

"I fear, dear Walter, you will think me very hard and unfeeling if I say what I really think."

"Oh, no, no! speak out, auntie—let me hear the truth; you are never really unkind."

"Then, Walter, I should call it obstinacy, and not moral courage. You made a promise, and you would stick to it through thick and thin, let the consequences to yourself and others be what they might, just because you had said it. Was it not so?"

Walter turned red, and looked very uncomfortable, and for a little time made no reply. Then he said hastily, "And what *ought* I to have done?"

"Well, my boy, in my judgment," replied his aunt, "you ought to have listened to your father, and to have withdrawn your offer, and to have borne patiently the shame and the annoyance this would have brought upon you from your friends Gregson, Saunders, and others."

"Ah, I see; and then I should have shown real moral courage. What's the difference, then?"

"I think, Walter, the difference is just this: in the course you took, your firmness and patience were for an *unworthy* object; had you taken the other course, they would have been for a *worthy* object. It seems to me that this makes all the difference. I could not myself call that moral courage which made a man carry through, spite of all hindrances, opposition, and with much personal sacrifice, a purpose which he must know to be unworthy. Now, I will give you an illustration of what I mean by an example. And first, I would remind you that all my heroes hitherto have been those who showed their moral courage about worthy objects; for instance, Washington, Howard, Colonel Gardiner, the young man in the American revival. But the person whose moral courage I am now going to mention was not on other occasions one of my heroes, but his conduct on one particular occasion is specially to the point just now. For I want you to see, dear boy, that true moral courage is shown, not in sticking to a thing just because you have said it, when you must know that you ought not to have said it, but in giving up what you have said, and bearing the reproach of doing so, when you have become convinced that you have said or undertaken what was wrong. It is duty, in fact, that makes all the difference."

"I see it, auntie; and who's your hero now?"

"Frederick the Great of Prussia, Walter."

"What! the man who ridiculed that good officer's religion?"



"The same; but remember that, while he ridiculed religion, he was constrained to honour that officer for his consistency. But his moral courage was exhibited on a very different occasion. Now, you must remember what sort of a man Frederick was,—he just resembled a spoiled child, who could not brook the slightest thwarting of his will or pleasure. In some things he was a miser, and in others just the reverse. He wore his uniform till it was patched and threadbare, while he gave two dollars each for cherries in the winter. He would pay enormous sums to secure a singer, and then refuse to allow the opera-house to be lighted with wax-candles, so that the pleasure of the evening was spoiled by the smell of tallow. He was, unhappily, well-known in the army for two peculiarities,—first, a temper of such iron unforgiveness that, if he had taken offence at any one, that man's career was closed, he was never employed again; and, second, a memory of such tenacity that not a hope existed of entrapping him into forgetfulness.

"Now, among his officers there was a colonel, a very brave man, and a capital soldier, who, on one occasion, had made some slight military slip or blunder. This drew on him the king's displeasure, and was never forgotten. So his pension or half-pay allowance was made the very lowest his rank would permit; for these allowances were regulated by the king himself.

"The poor colonel had a wife and a large family of children; he did not understand how to make the best of his small income, nor to improve it by other employment, so that he was at last reduced to what was little short of beggary and starvation. Day after day he placed himself in the royal ante-chamber and begged an audience; but the king would not hear him, and one day got into a towering passion when the officer-in-waiting ventured to utter the poor man's name in the king's presence. At last the colonel grew desperate. He could not make up his mind to beg; his wife was ill, his children starving,—what was he to do? He hit upon the curious idea of getting relief for his family by putting up, unobserved, in the night time, at the corners of the streets in Berlin, placards breathing the most venomous abuse of the king, in the hope that a reward would be offered to the person who should disclose who was the writer of the placard, that he might then himself claim the reward by informing against himself, and so might relieve the immediate pressing necessities of his wife and children, whatever might be the personal suffering and consequences to himself.

"The plan succeeded. The king, in a transport of rage, offered a reward of fifty gold pieces to whoever should disclose the

offender. But you may imagine Frederick's amazement when the poor colonel, in ragged regimentals, and half perishing with hunger, obtained an interview, and named himself as the guilty libeller.

"And now, how did the king act, when the unhappy officer begged that the reward might be sent at once to his wife, that she might obtain medical help for herself and bread for her children? What was such a man as Frederick likely to do? The colonel, when he confessed his crime, acknowledged that his life was justly forfeited, and asked no pity for himself; and had the king acted up to his ordinary rules, he would have at once ordered the miserable officer off to execution, or, at least, lifelong imprisonment. But it was not thus that he punished the crushed and miserable culprit. His heart was touched, his conscience was pricked; he felt that he had acted wrongly to the colonel in times past, and that he must now undo the wrong as far as was possible. But then remember the king's character and habits, especially in military matters. When he had once said 'No,' when he had once resolved upon a course of policy or action, he was the very last man to alter; the whole world might go to pieces sooner than he change. And yet, in this instance, having become thoroughly convinced that he had been treating a deserving man with injustice, he had the moral courage to reverse his conduct, to unsay what he had before said, and to incur the risk of being called fickle or changeable by doing what he now believed to be the right thing. So he at once laid the poor man on his own couch, for the colonel had fainted after making his confession. Then he gave him food, and sent the doctor to his wife and provisions for the children; and then, having summoned an attendant, he bade him take the colonel's sword, and consider the officer himself as his prisoner. After this he sat down and wrote a letter, and, having delivered it to the attendant, dismissed the unhappy man from his presence.

"The person who now had the colonel in charge was an old friend of his, who had often tried to put in a kind word for him to the king, but hitherto without any good result. And now, as he conducted him from the palace, he said, 'You are to be taken to the fortress of Spandau, but, believe me, you have nothing to fear.' Spandau was a fortress near Berlin, to which at that time all state prisoners were sent.

"On reaching Spandau, the officer gave his prisoner in charge to the captain of the guard, while he himself carried the king's sealed order and the prisoner's sword to the governor of the fortress, who, having read the king's letter, told the colonel

that, although he was his prisoner, yet he was not forbidden to invite him for once to join himself and his brother officers at the dinner-table.

"In due time the guests assembled, and with them the poor, half-starved colonel. But imagine the astonishment of all when, after the dinner was over, the governor of the fortress read out to the whole company the king's letter, which ran thus:—'Sir Commandant, I hereby nominate and appoint the present half-pay colonel, who was this day delivered over to you as a prisoner, to the command of my fortress of Spandau, and I look to receive from him in his new service proofs of the same fidelity, bravery, and attention to duty, and strict obedience, which he so often exhibited in the late war. The late commandant of Spandau now goes, in reward of his faithful services, as commandant of Magdeburg.'

"Now I call this, dear Walter, real nobility of conduct, real moral courage in such a man as Frederick, the courage of acting out his convictions, when in so doing he was going contrary to those cherished habits and principles which were part of his very self, and made him in a degree what he was in the eyes of the world. This was indeed moral courage, and not weak changeableness or fickleness, because it had a noble object. To have adhered to his ordinary course in the colonel's case, when he had become convinced that he had been wronging that officer, would have been obstinacy and littleness."

"Ay, auntie," said Walter thoughtfully, "I am sure your view is the right one. So good-bye, laurels, for this time;" saying which, he threw the boughs among the trees of the shrubbery. As he did so, he felt the loving arms of Miss Huntingdon drawing him closely to her, and then a warm kiss on his fair brow.

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## **Chapter Ten.**

### **Pluck.**

"Aunt," said Walter, as he sat at her feet, where he had placed himself after resigning his laurels, "I am afraid you are a little hard to please—or, at any rate, that I haven't much chance of getting you to see any moral courage in my unworthy self."

"Why not, dear boy?" she asked; "why should not you exhibit moral courage as well as any one else?"

"Oh, I don't know exactly; but it's so hard to know precisely what moral courage is after all, there are so many things that it is not. Now, what do you say to 'pluck,' auntie; is 'pluck' the same as moral courage?"

"That depends upon what you mean by 'pluck,' Walter."

"Oh! you must admire pluck. Every true-born Englishman and Englishwoman admires pluck."

"That may be, my dear nephew. I believe I do admire pluck, as far as I understand what it is. But you must give me your idea of it, that I may be able to answer your question about its being the same as moral courage."

"Well, dear aunt, it is a thoroughly English, or perhaps I ought to say British, thing, you know. It isn't mere brute courage. It will keep a man who has it going steadily on with what he has undertaken. There is a great deal of self-denial, and perseverance, and steady effort about it. Persons of high refinement, and of very little physical strength, often show great pluck. It is by no means mere dash. There are plucky women too—plucky ladies also as well as plucky men. Indeed I think that, as a rule, there is more true pluck among the weak than the strong, among the refined than the coarse-grained. Thus you will find high-bred officers show more pluck and sustained endurance in sieges and fatigue parties than most of the common soldiers; and so it is with travellers through difficult unexplored countries. Those who have had the least of rough training at home, but have given their mind more thoroughly to the work, will hold out and hold on pluckily when the big fellows with limbs and muscles like giants give in and knock up. It's pluck that carries them through. Now, isn't that pretty much the same as moral courage?"

"Hardly, I think, my dear boy."

"Well, where's the difference?"

"I think the difference lies in this, that, if I understand rightly what you mean, and what I suppose is commonly meant by pluck, it may be found, and often is found, where there is no moral element in it at all."

"I don't quite see it, auntie."

"Do you not? then I must go to examples to show what I mean. I heard you tell a story the other day at breakfast of what you called a very 'plucky' thing on the part of your friend Saunders."

"What! the fight he had with some bargees? Oh yes, I remember."

"Now, Walter, what were the circumstances of that fight?"

"Ah, I remember; and I think I see what you are driving at, Aunt Kate. Saunders, who is only a slightly-built fellow, and almost as thin as a whipping post, got into a row with some of those canal men; he wanted them to turn out of his way, or to let him pass and go through a lock before them, and they wouldn't."

"And did he ask them civilly?"

"Nay, Aunt Kate, not he. No, I'm sorry to say he swore at them; for he's a very hasty fellow with his tongue is Saunders."

"And were the bargemen unreasonably hindering him?"

"I can't say that. They were just going into the lock when he rowed up, and he wanted them to get out of his way and let him go into the lock first. I don't think myself that he was right."

"And what happened then?"

"Oh, he abused them, and they wanted to throw him into the canal; at least they threatened to do so. And then he challenged the biggest of them to a stand-up fight, and a ring was made and they fought; and certainly it was a strange thing to see Saunders, with his bare arms looking no thicker than a hop-pole, tackling that great fellow, whose right arm was nearly as thick as Saunders's body. Nevertheless, Saunders didn't shrink; he stood up to the bargee, and, being a capital boxer, he managed to win the day, and to leave the man he was fighting with nearly blind with two swollen black eyes. And every one said what 'pluck' little Saunders showed."

"Had the bargeman a wife and children?" asked Miss Huntingdon quietly, after a few moments' silence.

"What a strange question, auntie!" cried her nephew laughing. "Oh, I'm sure I don't know. I daresay he had."

"But I suppose, Walter, he was a plain working-man, who got bread for himself and his family by his work on the canal."

"Oh, of course, auntie; but what has that to do with it?"

"A very great deal, dear boy. There may have been plenty of pluck shown by your friend Saunders on that occasion, but certainly no moral courage. Indeed *I* should call his conduct decidedly immoral and cowardly."

"Cowardly, aunt!"

"Yes, cowardly, and mean. What right had he to use, or rather abuse, his superior skill as a pugilist for the purpose of carrying out an act of wrong-doing, and so to give pain and inflict loss on a plain working-man who had done him no harm, and had not had the same advantages of education as himself?"

"O aunt! you *are* severe indeed."

"Not too severe, Walter. Saunders, you acknowledge, spoke and acted hastily and improperly at first, and he must have known that he had done so. Now the true moral courage would have been shown in his confessing that he was wrong, and expressing sorrow for it."

"What! to a bargee!"

"Yes, to a bargee, Walter. The world might have called him mean or cowardly for such a confession, but he would have shown true moral courage and nobility for all that. To do what will give pain to others rather than incur the reproach of cowardice is really acting under the tyranny of a mean and slavish fear of man, though it may be a plucky thing in the eyes of the World."

"Ah, well, auntie, that is certainly a new view of things to me; and I suppose, then, you would apply the same test to duelling,—affairs of honour, as they used to be called?"

"Most certainly so, Walter. The duellist is one of the worst of moral cowards."

"Ah! but," cried the other, "to fight a duel used to be considered a very plucky thing, and it really was so, auntie."

"I don't doubt it, Walter; but it was a very immoral thing also. Happily, public opinion has quite changed on the subject of

duelling in our own country, and no doubt this has been owing indirectly to the spread of a truer religious tone amongst us. But what could be more monstrous than the prevailing feeling about duelling a few years ago, as I can well remember it in my young days. Why, duelling was at that time the highroad to a reputation for courage, and the man who refused to fight was frowned upon in good society, and in some places scouted from it. And—I say it with the deepest shame—my own sex greatly helped to keep up this feeling; for the man who had fought the most duels was, with the ladies of his own neighbourhood, for the most part, an object of special admiration and favour.

“And yet, what nobility or moral courage was there in the man who gave or accepted the challenge? Just think of what the consequences might be, and what the ground of the quarrel often was. A hasty word, or even a mere thoughtless breach of etiquette, would bring a challenge; and the person called out must not decline to meet his challenger, and give him ‘satisfaction,’ as it was called, in the shape of a pistol bullet, under pain of being cut by all his friends and acquaintances as a coward. So a man who was a husband and father would steal away from his home early in the morning, and go out to some lonely spot and meet the man whom he had offended, and be murdered in cold blood, and carried back a bleeding corpse to his miserable widow and fatherless children, just because he could not bear to be called a coward by the world. And to call this ‘satisfaction!’ The devil never palmed upon his poor deluded slaves a more transparent lie.

“Just think of two men, for instance, who had been friends for years, and in some unguarded moment had used intemperate language towards each other. Their companions tell them that this is a matter for giving and receiving satisfaction. So, in perfectly cold blood, with the most ceremonious politeness, the time and place of meeting are fixed by the seconds, who make all arrangements for their principals; and at the time appointed these two men stand face to face, with no malice, it may be, in either heart, feeling rather that there were faults on both sides, and at any rate no more wrong done or intended than a little mutual forbearance and concession might easily set right. And yet there they stand; at a given signal aim each at the other’s heart; and, if that aim is true, each is murdered by his brother, and hurried in a moment red-handed into the awful presence of his Maker and Judge. And this used to be called ‘satisfaction,’ and the man who refused to give it was branded as a coward. And such was the tyranny of this fashion which Satan had imposed upon thinking and immortal men, that rarely indeed

was a man found who had the true moral courage to refuse to fight a duel when challenged to do so."

"Ah then, auntie," said her nephew, "you would give the laurels for moral courage to the man who declined to fight."

"Certainly I would. Yes, I should have called him a truly noble and morally courageous man who, in those sad duelling days, should have declined a challenge on the ground that he feared God rather than man—that he was willing to brave any earthly scorn and loss rather than be a cold-blooded murderer and do violence to his own conscience, and break the laws of his Creator and Redeemer. Such courage as this would be worth, in my eyes, a thousandfold more than all the 'pluck' in the world."

"Indeed, dear Aunt Kate," said Walter seriously, "I believe you are right; but can you give me any example of such moral courage?"

"Yes, dear boy, I think I can. I call to mind the case of an excellent Christian man; I rather think he was an officer in the army, and that made his position more trying, because in the days when duelling was the fashion, for an officer to refuse a challenge would have raised up the whole of the service against him. However, whether he was a military man or not, he was at any rate a true soldier of the Cross. By something he had done, or left undone, he had grievously offended a companion, and this friend or acquaintance of his called on him one morning, and, being a hot-tempered man, charged him with the supposed offence or affront, and working himself up into a violent passion, declared that they must fight it out, and that he should send him a formal challenge. The other listened very quietly to this outburst of wrath, and then said calmly and deliberately, 'Fight you, must it be? certainly, I must not decline your challenge. Yes, we will fight, and it shall be now; here, on this very spot, and with swords. I have my weapon close at hand.' Saying which, the good man pulled a small Bible out of his pocket, and holding it up before his companion, whose face had turned deadly pale, said, 'Here is my sword, the sword of the Spirit, the only weapon I intend to fight you with.' Telling a friend about it afterwards, the Christian man remarked, 'Never did poor creature look upon a Bible with more satisfaction and relief than my adversary did on mine.' But at the time when the angry man was speechless with astonishment, the other proceeded to say to him kindly, 'Friend, I have a dear wife and children. Now, would it have been right in me to meet you with pistols or other deadly weapons, and to have entailed lasting misery on those so dear to me, and so dependent on me, by



either being myself your murderer or allowing you the opportunity of being mine?' That was true moral heroism, dear Walter, and it had its reward there and then, for the challenger at once grasped the hand of his companion and said, 'It would not have been right on your part; you have done just what it was your duty to do in declining my challenge, and I honour you for it. Let us part friends.'"

"Thank you, auntie; I admire your hero immensely. Now, pray give me another example, if you have one ready."

"I have read a curious story on this subject," replied Miss Huntingdon, "but I am not sure that it is a true one. I read it in some book years ago, but what the book was I cannot call to mind. However, the story may be true, and it may be useful to repeat it, as it just illustrates my present point about moral courage in reference to duelling. The story is substantially this:—

"Some years ago, when a regiment was quartered for a time in one of our county towns, one of the officers of the regiment was challenged by a brother officer, and refused to accept the challenge. This refusal soon flew abroad over all the town and neighbourhood, and the consequence was that every one turned his back on the man who refused to fight. He was avoided by all of his own rank of both sexes as a craven and a coward. Of course, he felt this very keenly. To be shut out from houses where he used to be welcomed; to be looked at with scorn by his brother officers; to have not a word addressed to him by any one of them when they met him on parade or at mess; to be the object of ill-concealed contempt even to the common soldiers;—these things were burdens almost intolerable to a man who had any respect for his own character as a soldier. However, for a time he bore it patiently. At last he hit upon an expedient to prove to the world that he was no coward, which was undoubtedly original and convincing, though, certainly, by no means justifiable.

"A large evening party was being given to the officers of the regiment by some distinguished person in the town; a ball probably, for many ladies were present. While all were in the very midst and height of their amusement, suddenly the disgraced officer made his appearance among them in his dress uniform. How could this be? how came he there? Assuredly no one had invited him. As he advanced into the middle of the brilliantly lighted room an empty space was left for him, officers and ladies shrinking from him, as though his near approach brought defilement with it. Looking quietly round, he

deliberately produced and held up a hand-grenade, as it was called—that is to say, a small bombshell—and, before any one of the astonished spectators could stop him, lighted a match at one of the wax-candles, and applied it to the fusee of the shell. A shower of sparks came rushing from the hand-grenade, which would explode in a minute or two or even less. The consternation of the company was frightful, and a furious and general rush was made to the doors. As the guests dashed out of the room, some just caught sight of the officer who had brought in and lighted the shell standing calmly over it with his arms folded. A few moments more, all the company had vanished terror-stricken, and then a frightful explosion was heard. One or two of the officers hurried back with horror on their faces. The man who had been branded as a coward lay outstretched on the ground. He had thrown himself flat on the floor the instant the room was cleared; the fragments of the shell had flown over him, and he was almost entirely uninjured.

“His object in this extraordinary proceeding was to show his brother officers and the world generally that a man might refuse, from conscientious motives, to fight a duel and yet be no coward. I am not praising or approving of his conduct in taking such a dangerous course to prove his point; for he was endangering the lives of many as well as his own life, and nothing could justify that. But, if the story be true, it shows at least that a man may decline to do an act from a high sense of duty, so as to bring upon himself the reproach of cowardice, and yet may be a man of undoubted bravery after all. But I do not at all place this officer on my list of moral heroes. I trust, however, dear Walter, that our conversation on this subject will strengthen in you the conviction that the noblest and truest courage is that high moral courage which enables a man to endure with patience any scorn, or loss, or blame, rather than deliberately do what he knows that his conscience and the Word of God condemn.”

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## **Chapter Eleven.**

### **An Explosion.**

It must not be supposed that Walter was prepared to follow out his brother Amos's moral courage at once and in everything. He was quite willing to admire this high-toned courage, and was learning to be content that his brother should enjoy the praise for it which was his due. He also fully intended to follow in the

same steps some day or other; but then no real and radical change had taken place in his heart and character, nor had he any deliberate desire to give up old habits which were dear to him, and adopt new ones which would involve considerable and sustained self-denial. So he contented himself for the present with being more kind to his brother, and more careful not to wound him by rash and unfeeling remarks.

One thing, however, in Amos's conduct sadly puzzled and annoyed him. Knowing that his brother was well provided with money of his own, he used not unfrequently to borrow from him when his own allowance ran short, which it very often did. This borrowing from Amos used to be but rarely followed by any repayment; for he had been so fully indulged by his father when younger, that he had no idea, now that he was getting more from under his father's hand, of denying himself, or going without anything he might happen to fancy. At first he used to tell the trades-people in the neighbouring town, when he made any purchases, to put them down to his father; but to this after a while Mr Huntingdon decidedly objected—finding, as he did, that expense was no consideration to Walter in the choice of an article, provided his father had to bear the cost. So Walter was made to understand that he must make the liberal allowance which his father gave him *do*, and that there must be no more running up of bills in Mr Huntingdon's name. But such an arrangement was very galling to Walter, who had lived all his early boyhood under the impression that, as being his father's favourite son, he had only to express a wish, or to ask for or to order a thing, and he would have it as a matter of course. However, the squire stood firm in the matter. Walter, he said, was old enough now to understand something of the value of money, and he must learn to cut his coat according to his cloth. This coat, however, with Walter was usually of such exaggerated dimensions that his ordinary allowance of material would go only a small way towards completing it. Consequently he used to have recourse to Amos, who invariably helped him through with a loan—for Walter would never receive help from his brother except as a loan—Amos at the same time hinting now and then at the hope of a partial repayment. To this Walter would reply that his brother should have it all back, if he wished it, "one of these fine days;" but when such seasons of exceptionally fine monetary weather were likely to occur, Amos found it difficult to conjecture. A change, however, had now come over the elder brother, much to the annoyance and disgust of Walter. A decided refusal of a loan of money was accompanied by Amos with a remonstrance with his brother on his extravagance.

In a pet, Walter told Amos that he might keep his nasty sovereigns and shillings to buy toffee for dirty little boys and girls. He was much obliged to him for his advice, but he knew his own concerns best; and as for extravagance, it was better to put a little money into the tradesmen's pockets than hoard it up like a stingy old miser, just to have the pleasure of saying, "See how rich I am."

To all this Amos made no reply at the time, but afterwards sent his brother a portion of the sum he wished to borrow, with a kind note, in which he said that Walter was welcome to this and to all other sums previously lent, as a free gift, but that for the future he could not lend him money beyond a few shillings occasionally, as he had a use for his own funds which made him unable to do for his brother what he had done for him in times past.

Partly touched at Amos's generosity, but more vexed at his present purpose respecting future loans, Walter was not disposed to look with a very favourable eye on his brother's money arrangements. What could he be wanting with so much? What could he be doing with it? There was nothing to show for it. If he had spent it in guns, or horses, or dogs, or travelling, or sight-seeing, Walter could have better acquiesced in the expenditure. But the money seemed to be wanted for something which, as far as he could see, turned out to be nothing. So his curiosity was considerably roused, and he resolved to find out, if he could, where his brother's spare cash went to.

Things were in this position, when one evening, as the whole family were seated on the lawn under some noble elms, enjoying the shade—for the weather had been exceedingly hot—a gentleman, well-known throughout the county for the interest he took in plans for doing good and alleviating the sorrows and sufferings of his poorer neighbours, called, and was invited by Mr Huntingdon to join his family on the lawn. "And now, my dear sir," said the squire, "I know you are out on some errand of benevolence. You are a grand worker yourself, and a grand giver too, so tell us what is your present charitable hobby, and we must try and give you a help, so that you may ride him easily."

"Thank you, Mr Huntingdon, with all my heart," said the other; "you are very kind. My hobby this time is a very robust animal, and will want a good deal of feeding if he is to keep up his strength. But to come to plain language, I am collecting subscriptions for a working-men's coffee-house in Redbury—a

British Workman they call it. You know, I dare say, that two ruinous old houses of mine in the market-place are being pulled down. Now, I am going to give the ground which one of them stands on for the new coffee-house. It is a capital situation, just in the centre of the town. I shall want funds, however, for the erection of a new and suitable building, and also a few annual subscriptions to keep the establishment going and pay the expenses of management, as I don't suppose it will be self-supporting, at any rate not at first."

"Well," said the squire, "let me look at your subscription list, for I see you have one with you. Ah, good! it is very generous of you to put down your own name for so large a sum to the building fund, besides giving the land. Put me down then for fifty pounds, and an annual subscription of three guineas till the concern is self-supporting."

"May I look at the list?" asked Miss Huntingdon, when their visitor had expressed his thanks to her brother. Having glanced at it, she also signified her willingness to be a helper in the work, and gave the list to Walter to return to the gentleman.

As her nephew was giving back the subscription list, he paused for a moment to run his eye over the names of the contributors. "Ah!" he said, "I see your own sons down, Mr Johnson, for a guinea a piece. I wish I could afford to follow their example."

"Perhaps, after all, you can," said the gentleman, smiling. "I am sure it does young people good to practise a little self-denial in helping on a good cause like this."

"I don't doubt that, sir," replied Walter, "but I am ashamed to say that self-denial of that sort is not much in my line. But, then, I am not a man of independent fortune like my brother Amos here. Ask him, pray. He has, or ought to have, lots of spare cash, and he is always on the look-out to be doing good with it." There was a tone of sarcasm in his voice which grated very painfully on Miss Huntingdon's ear. Amos coloured deeply, but made no remark.

"What say you, my young friend?" asked Mr Johnson, in a kindly voice, turning to him. "Your brother encourages me to hope that we may add your name to the list."

The young man, thus appealed to, looked uneasy and embarrassed, and then, in a few moments, said in an undertone, "I am sorry that just now I am not in a position to

add my name, but I shall be glad to do so when I am better able."

Mr Johnson did not press the matter, but shortly left, having first partaken of a little fruit which had been brought to him by the butler while the conversation about the subscriptions had been going on.

It has already been said that the old man Harry was a privileged servant of long standing, almost a portion of the estate, so that he was allowed little liberties which would not ordinarily have been permitted to one in his place. He had listened with burning cheeks and flashing eyes to Walter's sneering remarks about his brother's wealth, and now lingered near the group, as he was removing a little table on which he had placed the fruit for Mr Johnson. There was a restlessness about his manner which Miss Huntingdon noticed and wondered at; but her attention was then drawn to Walter, who, lounging against a bench, said in a rather drawling voice, "I really wonder what some people do with their money. For my part, I don't see what's the use of it except to be jolly with it yourself, and to make other people jolly with it.—Amos," he added abruptly, "what's up with you that you've become so very poor all of a sudden?"

To this Amos made no reply, but turned away to hide his vexation.

"My boy," said Mr Huntingdon, addressing his elder son, "I'm a little surprised myself that you should be at all hard up. I quite expected that you would have followed the example of Mr Johnson's sons, and have put down your name. I think you could have afforded it."

Still Amos did not reply, but seemed hesitating what to say. But here Walter broke in again. "I call it downright mean!" he exclaimed bitterly; "but he's getting meaner and meaner, that he is. What he does with his money nobody knows. I suppose he spends it in religious pocket-handkerchiefs and pious bed-quilts for the little niggers in Africa, or something of the sort. At any rate, he has none to spare for those nearer home." He was about to say more, but happening to raise his eyes he was astonished to see the old butler, who had been slowly drawing nearer and nearer, raising his right arm, and looking at him almost fiercely, as though he were going to strike him.—"What's up now, Harry?" he cried; "is the black cat dead?"

The old man's appearance now attracted every one's attention. He had drawn himself up to his full height, and had turned so as

to confront Mr Huntingdon, who was sitting with his sister by his side on a garden bench facing the house. His snow-white hair gave him ordinarily a venerable appearance, and this was now increased by the look of intense earnestness which glowed in his every feature. His back was to Amos, who, noticing that the old man was evidently about to speak under the pressure of some unusual excitement, half rose to his feet, but too late to stop old Harry's purpose.

"Master," said the old man, in a voice hoarse with emotion, "hear me; if it's to be for the last time, you must hear me. I can't hold in no longer; so it's no use, come what may."

Mr Huntingdon, struck with amazement at this speech of the old domestic, could only exclaim, "Well!" while his sister and Walter looked on and listened in mute wonder.

"Master," continued the old man, "you must hear me this once, if I'm to be turned away this blessed night for what I'm a-going to say. I've been hearing Master Amos called by Master Walter mean about his money, and I can't stand it, for I knows better."

Here Amos sprang forward, and coming in front of Harry, strove by gesture and whispered remonstrance to stop him; but the other shook his head, and motioned his young master back.

"It's of no manner of use, Master Amos," he cried; "I must and will speak—the time's come for it. I know why Master Amos can't afford to subscribe: 'tain't because he hasn't got the will; 'tain't because he's been spending it on himself, or sending it to the niggers, though he might be doing worse with it than that. His money goes to keep dear Miss Julia as was—bless her little heart!—from want; and it goes, too, to keep a home for her little ones, and one on 'em's a girl, and she's as like what her blessed mother was at her age as one lamb's like another. O master, master! if you loved Miss Julia as was as I love her, and as Master Amos loves her, though she has married a vagabond of a husband, and had the door of her home closed agen her for ever for it, and oh, if you'd but a touch still of the dear Saviour's forgiving love towards your own flesh and blood, you couldn't blame Master Amos for doing as he's doing, if you only knew too how he's been a-sacrificing of himself, and bearing the shame and scorn all the while without a murmur. There, master, I've had it out. And now I suppose I must pack up and be off for good; but it don't matter. I couldn't keep it in, so there's an end of it."

The effect of this speech on all the members of the party was overwhelming, though in different ways.

Mr Huntingdon's face turned deadly pale, and then flushed fiery red. He half rose from the bench on which he was sitting, and then sank back again and buried his face in his hands. Then he started up, and muttering something hoarsely, rushed into the house, and was not seen again by the family that night. Next morning, before breakfast, his sister received a hasty note from him, merely stating that he was leaving home, and should not return that day, and perhaps not for a few days.

The old butler's disclosure was also most trying to Miss Huntingdon by its suddenness. Not that she was unprepared for it altogether, for quiet observation of Amos had made her sure that he had some noble and self-denying work in hand, and that probably it might have something to do with the welfare of his sister, whom she knew that he dearly loved. She was grieved, however, that the old butler had blurted out the secret in such an abrupt manner, and at the terrible distress which the unexpected revelation had caused her brother.

As for Amos, he was ready to sink into the earth with dismay and vexation. All he could do was to look up reproachfully at Harry, who, now that the explosion had burst forth, and had driven his master apparently almost out of his senses, looked round him with an utterly crestfallen air, and then, coming up to Amos, said, while the big tears rolled rapidly down his cheeks, "Oh, dear Master Amos, you must forgive me. I didn't go for to do it with no bad meaning; but I couldn't bear it no longer. I daresay the master 'll turn me off for it, so I shall be punished if I've done wrong."

And how felt Walter? He was utterly crushed for a time beneath the old man's words. All the truth flashed upon him now. And this was the brother whom he had been holding up to ridicule and accusing of meanness. As thoughts of shame and stings of conscience stabbed into his heart with their thousand points, he sank down lower and lower to the ground till he had buried his face in the grass, sobbing convulsively. Then, before Amos could reply to the old butler's pitiful apology, he sprang up, and flinging his arms round his brother's neck and hiding his head in his bosom, wept for a time as if his heart would break. At last he looked up at Amos, who had pressed him close to him and had lovingly kissed him, and cried out, "Was there ever such a beastly, ungrateful sneak of a brother as I am? Here have I been calling Amos all sorts of names, and treating him worse than a dog, and he's been acting like a hundred thousand moral



heroes all the time! Can you forgive your cowardly snob of a brother, Amos dear?"

There was no reply to this but another long and close embrace.

As for old Harry, his face calmed down into its usual peacefulness. He no longer waited for any reply from his young master, but turned towards the house with a smile beaming all over his countenance, and saying half out loud, "All's well as ends well. There'll be good come out of this here trouble as sure as my name's Harry."

When he was fairly gone, both nephews drew close to their aunt, and took each a hand as they sat one on either side of her. Smiling at Walter through happy tears, she said, "I cannot cross my hands, you see, for my dear nephews have each got possession of one."

"But they *ought* to be crossed," said Walter in a low, sad voice.

"Not *now*, dear boy," she replied; "I think we may let bygones be bygones, for surely better and brighter days are coming."

"I hope so, aunt," said Walter, now more cheerily, "But you must give me the example for all that; for you have one to the purpose, I know."

"Yes," was her reply, "I think I have, and I will tell it because it may help to confirm you in keeping on the right side that new leaf which I feel sure you are now turning over."

"Ah, tell it me then, auntie; if it shames me a hit it will do me no harm."

"My hero then, this time, did not look much like one at the time when he displayed his heroism. He was a poor schoolboy, a Christ's Hospital lad."

"What! one of those who go about without hats, in long coats and yellow stockings?"

"Yes, the same. Charles Lamb, who tells the story, which is a true one, was himself one of these Bluecoat boys. Among his schoolfellows was this boy, my present moral hero. He was dull and taciturn, and no favourite with the other lads; but no one could bring any charge of improper conduct against him. There was one thing, however, about him which none of the other boys could understand. He always lingered behind all the rest

after dinner was over, and came out of the dining-hall hiding something under his dress, and looking about him suspiciously. What did it mean? Had he an unnaturally large appetite, so that he was led by it to steal food and eat it by himself after the meal was over? At any rate, if it was so, his extra provision did not improve his personal appearance, for he was still thin and hungry-looking.

"Some questioned him roughly on the subject, but they could get nothing out of him. He stopped for a while the practice which had drawn attention to him, but resumed it again when he thought that curiosity had died out, and that he could follow his old ways unobserved. But there were boys on the watch, and at last it was fairly ascertained that the poor lad used to gather, as far as he had opportunity, scraps of meat, pieces of fat, and fragments of bread and potatoes, which had been left on the boys' plates. These he collected and carried off. But then, what did he do with them? It was not likely that he ate them. No. Then he must sell them when he went home, for his parents lived in London, and he was a day boy. No doubt he disposed of them to people who were ready to give a few pence for refuse food, and thus the little miser was making money in this mean and underhand way. When this conclusion had been arrived at, the whole school was in a state of boiling indignation against the culprit.

"They might have taken the law into their own hands, and have punished him in their own rough and ready way. But no; his conduct was too shameful for that. It was looked upon as a serious disgrace to the whole school. So the case was duly reported to the masters, and by them to the governors. Witnesses were examined, and the offence proved. And now, what was the defence of the poor lad? He had borne shame, scorn, reproach, reviling; he had borne them all patiently, without murmur, without resentment. What, then, was the reason for his strange conduct? what motive or inducement could make him thus brave the scorn and contempt, the daily jeers, and the cut direct from his schoolfellows? All was soon made plain. This boy's parents were old and very poor—so poor, helpless, and friendless that they were often brought to the verge of starvation. In those days, remember, there was not the same attention paid to the poor of all classes, nor loving provision made for their wants, as there is now. So the noble son—for truly noble he was—submitted cheerfully to every trouble and shame that could fall upon himself, in order to get food from time to time for his almost famishing parents. They were too respectable to beg, and would have never allowed

their boy to beg for them; and yet so destitute were they that they were even glad of those miserable scraps, the after-dinner leavings on the boys' plates. And these their son gathered for them, indifferent to the consequences which might happen to himself, while at the same time he added a portion of his own daily food to supply the wants of the old people.

"Ah! this was true moral courage, dear Walter; and it was all the greater and nobler because it was exercised in such humble elements, as it were—I mean under circumstances where there was everything to degrade and nothing to elevate the poor boy in the eyes of his schoolfellows."

"I see, aunt," said Walter, sadly and thoughtfully. "Yes, they called him mean, and shabby, and selfish, and frowned and scowled at him, when all the while he was most nobly denying himself, and bearing all that trouble that he might help those who were dearer to him than his good name with his schoolfellows. Ay, I see it all; and it's just a case in point. That's just what I've been doing to my own dear noble brother, who has been sacrificing himself that he might help poor Julia and her little ones. And it has been worse in my case, because those Bluecoat boys had perhaps no particular reason to think well of the other chap before they found out what he had been driving at, and so it was natural enough that they should suspect him. But it's been exactly the reverse with me. I've had no reason to suspect Amos of anything but goodness. All the baseness and meanness have been on my own part; and yet here I've been judging him, and thinking the worst of him, and behaving myself like a regular African gorilla to him.—Dear Amos, can you really forgive me?"

Hands were clasped tightly across Miss Huntingdon's lap, and then Amos asked, "And what was done to the poor boy?"

"Oh," replied his aunt, "the governors of course acquitted him of all blame, and not only so, but rewarded him also, and, if I remember rightly, proper provision was made for the poor parents of the noble lad."

"Bravo! that's right," cried Walter with a sigh of relief. "Well, I don't like making big promises, but I do think I mean it when I say that Amos shall not have an ungenerous or reproachful word from me again."

"And so," said Miss Huntingdon with a smile, "good will come out of this evil, and it will turn out one of those 'all things' which 'work together for good to those who love God.'"

And Walter strove bravely to keep his word, and in the main succeeded.

Old Harry began, on the day after he had made the unlooked-for disclosure, to pack up his things and make preparations for his departure, feeling fully persuaded that, on his master's return, he should receive his instant dismissal. However, when Mr Huntingdon came home, two or three days after the explosion, not a word was said about the butler's leaving; indeed, if anything, his master's manner was kinder to him than usual, but not the slightest reference was made on either side to what had passed. With Amos, however, it was different. His father would scarcely speak to him beyond the coldest salutations morning and evening. The poor young man felt it keenly, but was not surprised. He could now open his mind fully to his aunt, and did so, and his own convictions and judgment agreed with her loving counsel that he should wait in trust and patience, and all would be well.

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## **Chapter Twelve.**

### **Progress.**

Mr Huntingdon's conduct toward Amos was a great grief to his sister, but she felt that she must not openly interfere, and that she could only do her best to make up to her nephew, as far as was possible, for his father's coldness, and look for brighter times, which she felt sure were coming, though as yet scarcely the faintest streak of dawn could be seen on the horizon. The old butler also was a great comfort to his young master, being most anxious to do everything in his power to undo any evil consequences which his own abrupt outspokenness might have brought upon Amos. So he encouraged him to persevere in his great purpose, with all his might, assuring him that things would come nicely round in time. Amos shook his head sadly, for he was naturally of a desponding turn; he could see at present little but clouds and thorns before him. Not that he wavered in his purpose for a moment, or had the least thought of holding back from the work he had set his hand to, even for a time. But his father's harshness and manifestly abiding displeasure towards himself he found very hard to bear. Nevertheless he was comforted by the reiterated affirmations of Harry that things were coming nicely round.

"Take my word for it," said the shrewd old man; "I knows the old master and his ways better than you do, Master Amos, though you're his son and I ain't. But I've knowed him years longer than you have. Now he's displeased with you; but I'll tell you who he's more displeased with, and that's just his own self. I don't mean no disrespect to your father, Master Amos—he's as kind-hearted a gentleman and as good a master as ever was, only a bit hasty sometimes; but then, which on us ain't got faults of our own enough and to spare? But I'm sure of this, he has never been fairly satisfied with keeping the door shut agen dear Miss Julia as was, and he won't *be* satisfied, depend on it, till she's back again—I know it. You see, though there was a reg'lar flare up when I spoke up for you the other night, he has never said a word of blame to me on the subject; and for why? I'll tell you—it's just because he knows and feels down in his heart of hearts as I were *not* to blame. But he must be angry with somebody—'tain't pleasant to be angry with one's own self; he's never been used to be angry with Master Walter; 'tain't no use being angry with Miss Huntingdon, 'cos she'd look the fiercest man as ever lived into a good temper—the mere sight of her face is enough for that, let alone her words. So master's just showing his anger to you, Master Amos. But it won't last; it can't last. So you just stick to your work, and I'll back you up all in my power, and I'll keep my tongue inside my teeth for the future, if I possibly can."

As for Walter, he felt thoroughly ashamed of himself, and tried in many ways to make up to his brother for his past unkindness, by various little loving attentions, and by carefully abstaining from taunting and ungracious speeches. This was very cheering to the heart of Amos, and lightened his trial exceedingly; but he felt that he could not yet take Walter fully into his confidence, nor expect him to join with him in a pursuit which would involve much quiet perseverance and habitual self-denial. For how were the banished ones to be brought back? What present steps could be taken for their restoration? Any attempt to introduce the subject of his sister's marriage and present position in his father's presence he felt would, as things now were, be worse than useless. Once he attempted to draw the conversation in that direction; but Mr Huntingdon, as soon as he became aware of the drift of his son's observations, impatiently changed the subject. On another occasion, when Walter plunged headlong into the matter by saying at tea-time to his aunt, "Eh! what a long time it is since we saw anything of Julia. I should so like to have her with us again; shouldn't you, auntie?" his father, striking his clenched fist on the table, and looking sternly at his son, said in a voice trembling with suppressed anger, "Not a

word again on that subject, Walter, unless you wish to drive me out of my own house." So Amos's great purpose, his life-work to which he had dedicated himself, his means, his best energies, seemed hopelessly blocked.

The great hindrance was, alas! in that father whose heart must be touched and subdued before any effectual and really onward steps could be taken. But this barrier seemed to become daily more formidable. "What am I to do, Aunt Kate?" Amos said, when discussing the matter with Miss Huntingdon in private; "what can I do now?"

"Rather, dear Amos," replied his aunt, "must the question be, not so much, 'What can I do now?' as, 'What must I do next?' Now it seems to me that the next thing is just prayerfully and patiently to keep your great purpose in view, and to be on the watch for opportunities, and God will give success in due time.—Ah, here comes Walter." She repeated to him what she had just been saying to his brother, and then continued, "Now here we may bring in moral heroism; for it is a very important feature in moral courage to wait steadily watching for opportunities to carry out a noble purpose, and specially so when the way seems completely, or to a great extent, hedged up."

"Examples, auntie, examples!" exclaimed Walter.

"You shall have them," she implied. "I have two noble heroes to bring before you, and they both had the same glorious object in view, and went steadily on in their pursuit of it when everything before them looked as nearly hopeless as it could do. My two heroes are Clarkson and Wilberforce.

"I daresay you remember that there was a time when slaves were as much property and a matter of course in our own foreign possessions as they were a short time since in the Southern States of America. So completely was this the case, that when a slave was brought to England by one of our countrymen, he was considered his master's absolute property. However, this was happily brought to an end more than a hundred years ago. A slave named Somerset, who had been brought by his master to this country, fell ill, and his master, thinking that he would be of no more use to him, turned him adrift. But a charitable gentleman, Mr Granville Sharp, found him in his wretched state, had pity on him, and got him restored to health. Then his old master, thinking that now he would be of service to him, claimed him as his property. This led to the matter being taken up; a suit was instituted; and by a

decision of the Court of King's Bench, slavery could no longer exist in England. That became law in 1772. The poet Cowper has some beautiful lines on this subject:—

“Slaves cannot breathe in England: if their lungs  
Receive our air, that moment they are free;  
They touch our country, and their shackles fall.  
That's noble, and bespeaks a nation proud  
And jealous of the blessing. Spread it, then,  
And let it circulate through every vein  
Of all our empire, that, where Britain's power  
Is felt, mankind may feel her mercy too.’

“Still, we could hold, and did hold, slaves to a large extent in some of our colonies. Now the great object of Clarkson and Wilberforce was to get slavery abolished throughout the British dominions all the world over; in other words, that it should not be lawful for a slave to exist as a slave in any of our possessions. But they had a hard and steady fight for years and years in pursuit of their great object. Patience, faith, calm courage, perseverance, these were the noble constituents of their moral heroism. Thomas Clarkson, from youth to manhood, from manhood to old age, devoted himself unreservedly to the one great purpose of obtaining freedom and justice for the oppressed negro. His work was to collect information, to spread it on all sides, to agitate the question of the abolition of slavery throughout the United Kingdom and the world. William Wilberforce's place in the work was different. His part was to introduce Clarkson's plans to the notice of Parliament, and to advocate them with his wonderful eloquence, and to persevere in that advocacy with untiring zeal and love. When he called the attention of the House of Commons to the question of the slave-trade in 1788 he was met by the most determined opposition. Men's worldly interests were arrayed in arms against the abolition. The traffic in slaves brought millions of money to the British coffers. So the case appeared for a time to be hopeless. But this made no difference to Wilberforce—his courage never failed; his resolution never wavered; year after year he brought forward the subject, and, though he experienced eleven defeats in his endeavours to carry the measure, at last he triumphed. And the result was the termination of slavery in the British dominions in August 1834, and that, too, at a cost to the country of twenty millions of money as compensation to those who, at the time, were holders of property in slaves. All honour to Clarkson and Wilberforce, for theirs was a noble victory, a

grand result of the unwavering, unflinching moral courage of those two moral heroes."

"A thousand cheers for them, auntie!" cried Walter. Then turning to his brother, he added, "So you see, Amos, you must not lose heart; indeed, I know you won't. Things will come nicely round, as Harry said. My father, I am sure, will understand and appreciate you in time; and I shall have to erect a triumphal arch with flowers and evergreens over the front door, with this motto in letters of gold at the top, 'Amos and moral courage for ever.'"

"I don't know," said his brother rather sadly; "I trust things may come round as you say. But anyhow, I mean, with God's help, to persevere; and it is a great happiness for me to know that I have the sympathy of my dear aunt and brother."

Not many days after this conversation, when the family were at breakfast, Mr Huntingdon asked Walter when the steeplechase was coming off.

"Three weeks to-morrow, I believe," replied his son. "By-the-by, I think I ought to mention that Saunders wants me to be one of the riders."

"You!" exclaimed his father in astonishment.

"Yes, father; he says I am the best rider of my age anywhere round, and that I shall stand a good chance of coming in at the head of them."

"Very likely that may be the opinion of Mr Robert Saunders," replied the squire; "but I can only say I wish you were not quite so friendly with that young man; you know it was he who led you into that scrape with poor Forester."

"Ah, but, father, Bob wasn't to blame. You know I took the blame on myself, and that was putting it on the right shoulders. There's no harm in Bob; there are many worse fellows than he is."

"But perhaps," said Miss Huntingdon, "he may not be a very desirable companion for all that."

"Perhaps not, auntie.—Well, father, if you don't mind my riding this time, I'll try and keep a little more out of his way in future."



"I think you had better, my boy; you are not likely to gain much either in reputation or pocket by the acquaintance. You know it was only the other day that he helped to let you in for losing a couple of sovereigns in that wretched affair on Marley Heath; and one of them was lost to about the biggest blackguard anywhere hereabouts. I think, my boy, it is quite time that you kept clear of such things."

"Indeed, father. I almost think so too; and, at any rate, you won't find me losing any more sovereigns to Jim Jarrocks. But I'm almost pledged to Saunders to ride in this steeplechase. It will be capital fun, and no harm, and perhaps I may never have another chance."

"I had rather you didn't," said his father; "anyhow, your friend Saunders must find you a horse for I am not going to have one of mine spoilt again, and your own pony would make but a poor figure in a steeplechase."

"All right, father," replied Walter, and the conversation passed on to another subject.

The three weeks came and went; the steeplechase came off, and Walter was one of the riders. The admired of all eyes, he for a time surmounted all difficulties. At last, in endeavouring to clear an unusually wide ditch, he was thrown, and his horse so badly injured that the poor animal had to be shot. Walter himself, though stunned and bruised, was not seriously hurt, and was able to return home in time for dinner.

The party had assembled in the drawing-room, all but Mr Huntingdon. Five minutes—ten—a quarter of an hour past the usual time, but the squire had not made his appearance. At last his step was heard rapidly approaching. Then he flung the door hastily open, and rushed into the room, his face flushed, and his chest heaving with anger. Striding up to Walter, he exclaimed: "So this is the end of your folly and disobedience. You go contrary to my orders, knowing that I would not have you take part in the steeplechase; you ruin another man's horse worth some three hundred guineas; and then you come home, just as if nothing had happened, and expect me, I suppose, to pay the bill. But you may depend upon it I shall do nothing of the sort."

No one spoke for a few minutes. Then Walter stammered out that he was very sorry.

"Sorry, indeed!" cried his father; "that's poor amends. But it seems I'm to have nothing but disobedience and misery from my children."

"Dear Walter," said his sister gently, "are you not a little hard upon the poor boy?"

"Hard, Kate?—poor boy?—nonsense! You're just like all the rest, spoiling and ruining him by your foolish indulgence. He's to be master, it seems, of the whole of us, and I may as well give up the management of the estate and of my purse into his hands."

Miss Huntingdon ventured no reply; she felt that it would be wiser to let the first violence of the storm blow by. But now Amos rose, and approached his father, and confronted him, looking at him calmly and steadily. Never before had that shy, reserved young man been seen to look his father so unflinchingly in the face. Never, when his own personal character or comfort had been at stake, had he dreamt of so much as a remonstrance. He had left it to others to speak for him, or had submitted to wrong or neglect without murmuring. How different was it now! How strange was the contrast between the wild flashing eyes of the old man, and the deeply tranquil, thoughtful, and even spiritual gaze of the son! Before that gaze the squire's eyes lost their fire, his chest ceased to heave, he grew calm.

"What's the meaning of this?" he asked in a hoarse voice.

"Father," said Amos slowly, "I am persuaded that you are not doing full justice to dear Walter. I must say a word for him. I do not think his going and riding in the steeplechase was an act of direct disobedience. I think your leave was implied when you said that at any rate he must not look to you for a horse. I know that you would have preferred his not going, and so must he have known, but I do not think that he was wrong in supposing that you had not absolutely forbidden him."

"Indeed!" said Mr Huntingdon dryly and sarcastically, after a pause of astonishment; "and may I ask where the three hundred guineas are to come from? for I suppose the borrowed horse will have to be paid for."

"Father," said Walter humbly, and with tears in his eyes and a tremor in his voice, "I know the horse must be paid for, because it was not Saunders's own; he borrowed it for me, and I know that he cannot afford the money. But it's an exaggeration that

three hundred guineas; the horse was really worth about a hundred pounds."

"It makes no matter," replied his father, but now with less of irritation in his voice, "whether it was worth three hundred guineas or one hundred pounds. I want to know who is going to pay for it, for certainly *I* am not."

"You must stop it out of my allowance," said Walter sorrowfully.

"And how many years will it take to pay off the debt, then, I should like to know?" asked his father bitterly.

Again there was a few moments' silence. But now Amos stepped forward once more, and said quietly, "Father, I will take the debt upon myself."

"*You*, Amos!" exclaimed all his three hearers, but in very different tones.

Poor Walter fairly broke down, sobbing like a child, and then threw himself into his brother's arms and kissed him warmly. Mr Huntingdon was taken quite aback, and tried in vain to hide his emotion. Miss Huntingdon wept bright tears of gladness, for she saw that Amos was making progress with his father, and getting nearer to his heart.

"There, then," said her brother with trembling voice, "we must make the best of a bad job.—Walter, don't let's have any more steeplechases.—Amos, my dear boy, I've said I wouldn't pay, so I must stick to it, but we'll make up the loss to you in some way or other."

"All right, dear father," replied Amos, hardly able to speak for gladness. Never for years past had Mr Huntingdon called him "dear." That one word from his father was worth the whole of the hundred pounds to him twice over.

The squire had business with one of the tenants in the library that evening, so his sister and her two nephews were alone in the drawing-room after dinner.

"Aunt," said Walter, "look at my hands; do you know what this means?" His hands were crossed on his knees.

"I think I do," she replied with a smile; "but do you tell me yourself."

"Why, it means this,—*I* am going to bring forward for our general edification an example of moral courage to-night, and my hero is no less a person than Martin Luther; and there is *my* Martin Luther." As he said this he placed his hand on his brother's shoulder, and looked at him with a bright and affectionate smile. "Yes, he is my Martin Luther: only, instead of his being brought before a 'Diet of Worms,' a very substantial *diet* of fish, flesh, and fowl has just been brought before *him*; and instead of having to appear before the Emperor Charles the Fifth, he is now appearing before Queen Katharine the First of Flixworth Manor."

Both his hearers laughed heartily and happily; then he added: "Now I am going to trot out my hero—nay, that word 'trot' won't do; I've had too much of both trotting and galloping lately. But what I mean is, I want to show you what it is that I specially admire in my hero, and how this exactly fits in with my dear hero-brother Amos. Ah! I see he wants to stop me, but, dear Aunt Kate, you must use your royal authority and back me up; and when I have done, you can put in what notes and comments and addenda and corrigenda you like, and tell me if I have not just hit the right nail on the head.

"Very well; now I see you are all attention. Martin Luther—wasn't he a grand fellow? Just look at him as he is travelling up to the Diet of Worms. As soon as the summons came to him, his mind was made up; he did not delay for a moment. People crowded about him and talked of *danger*, but Luther talked about *duty*. He set out in a waggon, with an imperial herald before him. His journey was like a triumphal procession. In every town through which he passed, young and old came out of their doors to wonder at him, and bless him, and tell him to be of good courage. At last he has got to Oppenheim, not far from Worms, and his friends do their very best to frighten him and keep him back; but he tells them that if he should have to encounter at Worms as many devils as there were tiles on the houses of that city, he would not be kept from his purpose. Ah! that was a grand answer. And then, when he got to his lodgings, what a sight it must have been! They were crowded inside and out with all classes and all kinds of persons,—soldiers, clergy, knights, peasants, nobles by the score, citizens by the thousand. And then came the grand day of all, the day after his arrival. He was sent for into the council-hall. What a sight that must have been for the poor monk! There was the young emperor himself, Charles the Fifth, in all his pomp and splendour, and two hundred of his princes and nobles. Why, it would have taken the breath out of a dozen such fellows as I

am to have to stand up and speak up for what I knew to be right before such a company. But Luther did speak up; and there was no swagger about him either. They asked him to recant, and he begged time to consider of it. They met again next day, and then he refused to recant, with great gentleness. 'Show me that I have done wrong,' he said, 'and I will submit: until I am better instructed I cannot recant; it is not wise, it is not safe for a man to do anything against his conscience. Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.' There, auntie, don't you agree with me in giving the crown of moral courage to Martin Luther? It's an old story, and I've learned it quite by heart, for I was always fond of it, but it is none the less true on that account."

"Yes, Walter, clear boy," replied his aunt, "I must heartily agree with you, and acknowledge that you have made a most excellent choice of a hero in Martin Luther. Not a doubt of it, he was a truly great and good man, a genuine moral hero. For a man who can be satisfied with nothing less than what is real and right; who is content to count all things loss for the attainment of a spiritual aim, and to fight for it against all enemies; who does his duty spite of all outward contradiction; and who reverences his conscience so greatly that he will face any difficulty and submit to any penalty rather than do violence to it, that is a truly great man, exhibiting a superb example of moral courage. And such a man, no doubt, was Martin Luther; and I believe I can see why you have chosen him just now, but you must tell me why yourself."

"I will, Aunt Kate. You see we are in Worms now. This is the council-hall; before dinner to-day was the time of meeting; and my dear father was in his single person the august assembly. Amos, the best of brothers to the worst of brothers, is Martin Luther. He might have kept himself to himself, but he comes forward. It is the hardest thing possible for him to speak; if he had consulted his own feelings he would have spared himself a mighty struggle, and have left his scamp of a brother to get out of the scrape as best he could. But he stands up as brave as a lion and as gentle as a lamb, and looks as calm as if he were made of sponge-biscuits instead of flesh and blood. He ventures to address the august assembly—I mean my father—in a way he never did in all his life before, and never would have done if he had been speaking for himself; but it was duty that was prompting him, it was love that was nerving him, it was unselfishness that made him bold. And so he has shown himself the bravest of the brave; and I hope the brother for whom he has done and suffered all this, if he has any shame left in him,

will learn to copy him, as he already learned to respect and admire him. There, Aunt Kate, I've been, and gone, and said it."

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## **Chapter Thirteen.**

### **Perplexing.**

Many months had rolled by since Amos had undertaken to pay for the horse which his brother had unhappily ruined in the steeplechase. Mr Huntingdon never alluded to the matter again, but the difference in his manner towards his elder son was so marked that none could fail to observe it. There were both respect and affection in his voice when he addressed him, and the poor young man's naturally grave face lighted up as with a flood of sunshine when his father thus spoke to him. Miss Huntingdon, of course, rejoiced in this change with all her heart. Walter was as pleased and proud at it as if some special honours were being conferred on himself. And old Harry—it was a sight worth seeing to observe the old servant when his master spoke kindly to Amos: what with winking and nodding, opening wide his eyes, lifting his eyebrows, rolling his tongue about, and certain inward volcanic mutterings, all constituting a little bit of private acting for his own special and peculiar benefit, it might have been thought by those who did not know him that something had been passing at the moment causing a temporary derangement of his digestive organs. But Miss Huntingdon, as she marked his mysterious conduct, was perfectly aware that it simply meant an expression on his part—principally for the relief of his own feelings, and partly also to give a hint to those who might care to know how he felt in the matter—that things were "coming round nicely," and that Mr Amos would get his proper place and his rights given him in the family, and would in due time accomplish his great purpose.

Amos himself began to be much of the same opinion, and was greatly touched by receiving a cheque from his father for a hundred pounds one morning, with the assurance that he did not wish him to be out of pocket on Walter's account, while at the same time the squire neither mentioned the steeplechase himself nor allowed Amos to refer to it. The money was now his own, he remarked, and the less said about where it was going to the better.

A new year had now begun, and deep snow lay around the Manor-house. The family party had assembled at breakfast, all

except Miss Huntingdon and Amos. The former at last appeared, but there was trouble on her brow, which Walter, who loved her dearly, instantly noticed.

"Auntie dear," he asked, "what's amiss? I'm sure you are not well this morning."

"I am a little upset, dear boy," she replied, "but it is nothing serious."

"I hope not, Kate," said her brother. "But where is Amos?"

"Well, Walter," replied his sister, "that is just it. I have a note from him this morning asking me to excuse him to you; that duty has called him away, and that I shall understand in what direction this duty lies. I can only hope that nothing serious is amiss; but this I am quite sure of, that Amos would never have gone off in this abrupt way had there not been some pressing cause."

Mr Huntingdon did not speak for a while, his thoughts were evidently troubling him. He remembered the last occasion of his son's sudden absence, and was now well aware that it had been care for his poor erring child's neglected little ones that had then called Amos away. Perhaps it might be so now. Perhaps that daughter herself, against whom his heart and home had been closed so long, might be ill or even dying. Perhaps she was longing for a father's smile, a father's expressed forgiveness. His heart felt very sore, and his breakfast lay untasted before him.

As for Walter, he knew not what to say or think. He dared not speak his fears out loud lest he should wound his father, whose distress he could not help seeing. He would have volunteered to do anything and everything, only he did not know exactly where to begin or what to propose. At length Mr Huntingdon, turning to the old butler, who was moving about in a state of great uneasiness, said, "Do you know, Harry, at what hour Mr Amos left this morning?"

"No, sir, not exactly. But when Jane came down early and went to open the front door, she found the chain and the bolts drawn and the key turned back. It was plain that some one had gone out that way very early."

"And when did you get your note from Amos, Kate?" asked her brother.

"My maid found it half slipped under my door when she came to call me," was the reply.

"And is there nothing, then, to throw light on this sudden and strange act on Amos's part?" asked the squire.

"Well, there is," she answered rather reluctantly. "My maid has found a little crumpled up sheet of paper, which Amos must have accidentally dropped as he left his room. I don't know whether I ought to have taken charge of it; but, as it is, the best thing I can do is to hand it to you."

Mr Huntingdon took it from her, and his hand shook with emotion as he glanced at it. It was a small sheet of note-paper, and there was writing on two sides in a female hand, but the lines were uneven, and it seemed as though the writer had been, for some reason or other, unable to use the pen steadily. Mr Huntingdon hesitated for a moment. Had he any right to read a communication which was addressed to another? Not, surely, under ordinary circumstances. But the circumstances now were not ordinary; and he was the father of the person to whom the letter was addressed, and by reading it he might take steps to preserve his son from harm, or might bring him out of difficulties. So he decided to read the letter, and judge by its contents whether he was bound to secrecy as to those contents or no. But, as he read, the colour fled from his face, and a cold perspiration burst out upon him. What could the letter mean? Was the writer sane? And if not, oh, misery! then there was a second wreck of reason in the family; for the handwriting was his daughter's, and the signature at the foot of the paper was hers too. With heaving breast and tearful eyes he handed the letter to his sister, whose emotion was almost as distressing as his own as she read the following strange and almost incoherent words:—

"Amos,—I'm mad; and yet I am not. No; but he will drive me mad. He will take them both away. He will ruin us all, body and soul."

Then there was a break. The words hitherto had been written in a steady hand; those which followed were wavering, as though penned against the will of the writer, and under fear of some one standing by. They were as follows:—

"Come to me early to-morrow morning. You will see a man at the farther side of Marley Heath on horseback—follow him, and he will bring you to me, for I am not where I was. Come alone,



or the man will not wait for you, and then you will never be seen again in this world by your wretched sister,—Julia.”

Such were the contents of the mysterious letter, which were well calculated to stir to their depths the hearts of both the squire and his sister, who looked at each other as those look who become suddenly conscious of a common misfortune. A spell seemed on their tongues. At last the silence was broken by Walter.

“Dear father! dear auntie!” he exclaimed, “whatever is the matter?”

“Matter enough, I fear,” said his father sadly.—“There, Kate, let him look at the letter.”

Walter read it, and his eyes filled with tears. Busy thoughts chased one another through his brain, and very sad and humbling thoughts they were. He understood now much that had once seemed strange in Amos. He began to appreciate the calm and deep nobility of his character, the tenacity of his grasp on his one great purpose. He gave back the letter to his father with downcast eyes, but without making any remark upon it.

And now, what was to be done? As soon as breakfast was over, the three, by Mr Huntingdon’s desire, met in the library. The letter was laid on the table before them, and the squire opened the discussion of its contents by saying to his sister, “What do you make out of this miserable business, Kate?”

“Plainly enough,” was her reply, “poor Julia is in great distress. I gather that her cruel and base husband has been removing, or intending to remove, her two children from Amos’s charge, and that she is afraid they will be utterly ruined if they continue in their father’s hands. Poor thing! poor thing! I pity her greatly.”

Her brother did not speak for a while, but two big tears fell on his daughter’s letter, as he bent over it trying to conceal his emotion. “And what do you think about it, my boy?” he said to his son, when he had in some degree recovered his composure.

“Aunt Kate is right, no doubt,” replied Walter, “but that is not all. It strikes me that my sister wrote the first part of this letter of her own head, but not the last. I should not wonder if that scamp of a fellow her husband has found her out writing, and has forced her to add the last words, intending to bring poor Amos into trouble some way or other.”

"I believe the boy is right," said Mr Huntingdon anxiously; "but then, what is to be the next step?"

"Surely," said his sister, "you ought to send out some one immediately to follow up Amos, and see that no harm comes to him."

"Well, I hardly know," replied her brother; "I don't think any one would dare to do Amos any personal injury, and I don't see that it would be anyone's interest to do so. The last time he was called away he returned to us all right; and perhaps he may feel hurt if we do not let him manage things in his own way, seeing he has so nobly taken upon himself the cause of poor—poor"—he would have said "Julia," but he could not get out the word—"my poor child." Here the squire fairly broke down, covering his face with his hands.

"Shall we ask Harry," said his sister, when she could trust herself to speak, "who brought this note for Amos? that mis-hit give us a little bit of a clew if it should be necessary to go and find him out." Harry was accordingly summoned and questioned. He had already made full inquiries of the other servants, but none of them could throw any light on the subject. No one about the premises knew anything about the carrier of the letter. So it was resolved to wait, in hopes that either Amos himself or, at any rate, tidings of him and of his movements would arrive some time during the day. Hour, however, passed by after hour, and no news of Amos came to gladden the hearts at the mansion; and when darkness settled down, and nothing had been heard of the absent one, a deep gloom pervaded the whole household. But of all hearts under that roof during that long and weary night, none was so heavy as Mr Huntingdon's. Memories of the past crowded in upon him; smittings of conscience deeply troubled him. Had he acted a father's part towards that erring daughter? should he have closed the door of home and heart so fast, and kept it barred against her? was she not still his own flesh and blood? and could he justify to himself the iron sternness which had perhaps now driven her to despair? How could *he* hope for mercy who had shown neither mercy nor pity to one whose sinful disobedience and folly could not make her less his child, though doubtless a sadly misguided one? When morning came, Mr Huntingdon rose a wiser and a humbler man. He poured out his heart in prayer for forgiveness of his own many sins and shortcomings, and then came to a full determination to deal very differently with Amos for the time to come, and to undo his past treatment of his poor daughter as opportunity might be afforded him.

And now we must leave for a while the party at the Manor-house in their sadness and perplexity, and follow Amos Huntingdon himself. When he had retired to his room on the night previous to his unexpected departure, he was startled by hearing the sound of what seemed to be earth or small pebbles thrown against his bedroom window. He paused for a few moments, and the sound was repeated. Then he opened the window slowly, and looking out, cried, "Who is there?"

All around, the snow lay thick on the ground. His room was on one side of the house, and its window looked out on a flower-garden, so that any one approaching the building from that side would not be liable to be observed by the general inmates of the Manor-house. When Amos had asked who was there, a short figure, partly muffled up in a cloak, rose from where it had been crouching against the wall, and a man's voice said in a loud whisper, "Is that you, Mr Amos?"

"What do you want with me at this hour?" was the reply.

"Ah! all right," rejoined the stranger; "here—catch this." Saying which, he flung something up at the opening made by the raising of the window. "A bad shot," said the mysterious person half out loud, and with perfect coolness, as the thing he was throwing fell short of its mark. "Try again." Suiting the action to the word, he a second time aimed at the opening, and now with success. A small packet fell into the room, and reached the floor with a "thud."

"All right; good-night," said the thrower with a chuckle, and soon disappeared through the falling snow, which was now coming down thickly.

What could be the meaning of this strange performance? Was it some foolish hoax or practical joke played off by Saunders or Gregson, or some other of Walter's giddy and not over-considerate companions? He almost thought it must be so, and that his brother had put them up to the joke for some wild piece of fun, or to win some senseless wager. Rather vexed at the thought, and not feeling over amiable towards the missile, if such it was, which had come so unseasonably and so unceremoniously into his chamber, he was half inclined at first to throw it back through the window on to the snow. And yet, perhaps, he had better see what it was. So he took it from the floor. It was a little brown paper parcel, about three inches square, and very heavy for its size. His curiosity was now excited. He opened the packet warily, lest it should contain something explosive, such as might cause a report, not

dangerous in itself, but calculated to alarm the family. There was nothing, however, of such a kind, but merely a flat piece of thick tile, with a sheet of note-paper doubled round it.

Rather annoyed at the folly of the whole thing, he slowly unfolded the paper, and opened it out. The writing struck him at once; it was his sister's. The contents of the letter staggered him. That his sister had written it there could be no doubt. That she was in grievous trouble, and that her villainous husband had violated his pledge and was removing the children out of his reach, was equally plain. The appearance of the closing portion of the note puzzled him. He had his misgivings about it. Had his sister's husband anything to do with it, and with making the appointment on Marley Heath? It might or might not be so. The changed appearance of the latter part of the writing might only be the result of agitation or distress on his sister's part. But, anyhow, what was the course that duty and brotherly love bade him now take? A lonely meeting in the snow with a solitary horseman on Marley Heath early in the morning did not read very pleasantly nor appear very safe; and yet, could he leave his poor sister to her misery? If he should do so, what evils might not follow? and what would come of the great purpose to which he had dedicated his life and energies? Was this a time for fear or shrinking back? No, surely. So he knelt down and asked for guidance of him who is unerring Wisdom to every one of his children. And then he retired to rest, and slept soundly till early morning.

His mind was made up. Having written a few lines to his aunt, he made his way quietly out of the house to the stable, and, mounting his own faithful pony, sallied forth. He had, however, dropped his sister's note by his own room door without being aware of it, and did not miss it, for his mind was full of engrossing thoughts. It was a bright and sparkling morning; the snow had been falling more or less for the last few days, and had in some places formed deep drifts, as a strong wind had been blowing from the north for some hours. But now all was calm and bright for the present, though the distant horizon seemed to threaten a further downfall before long.

Amos had clothed himself warmly, for the cold was now severe. His great-coat, also, which he had gathered close round him, contained in its ample pockets some cakes, oranges, and sweeties—a stock of which he always kept on hand in his own room for the benefit of his niece and nephew whenever he might happen to visit them at the cottage. On the present occasion, it is true, he had no expectation of meeting the

children, but only their mother; but he brought these little luxuries with him notwithstanding, as they might perhaps be welcome to his poor sister, who was not likely to be furnished with more than the bare necessities of life by the man who, though bound to care for her comfort, would no doubt wrench from her every penny he was able.

With noiseless tread, then, did Prince the pony carry his young master along the dazzling white roads, shaking his ears and his head from time to time, as though in wonder at what could have induced his owner to bring him out so early. Amos had, however, not neglected the poor animal, but had given him a good feed before starting, having himself also made such an early meal as the pantry could provide him. So the two jogged quietly on; and whatever misgivings the young man might have from time to time, these were more than outweighed by the abiding conviction that he was on the path of love and duty, and might therefore expect to be guided and preserved by Him to whom he had committed his cause. Still, there was something overawing in the solitude of that early ride. Not a person did he meet as he threaded his way through the lanes. The moon was some days past the full, and shone with almost undiminished light on the sparkling crystals of snow. Spikes of hoar-frost bristled on the branches of the trees, and here and there a long gaunt group of icicles, dependent from an overhanging rock, gleamed and flashed in the pale light as he passed along.

And now, when he had accomplished some three miles—which was about half the distance to the heath—he emerged from a winding road which had led him through a copse on to high ground, from which he had an almost panoramic view of the surrounding country. He checked his pony and looked about him. How exquisitely fair and pure was that landscape, one vast expanse of spotless white! Not a breath of wind was now stirring, and, struggling against the moonlight, the first flushes of a winter's dawn crept up along the far-off eastern sky. Everything spoke of peace and purity. God's hand had clothed the earth, the trees with a stainless robe of majestic beauty studded with countless flashing gems. Man's works were hidden or but dimly seen here and there, with all their imperfections withdrawn from sight under that snowy veil. And man himself was absent. An all-absorbing sense of the nearness of God stole over the young traveller's heart, so deep, so unearthly as to be almost painful, but, oh, so full of blessedness! What should make him afraid, with God so near? And then there unfolded themselves to his memory the words, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen

thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Amos bowed his head, and remained wrapt for a while in holy and happy meditation.

But he had a work before him, and must move on. At last he reached Marley Heath. Hitherto he had seen no human being, nor indeed any living thing except a hare which once crossed his path. The heath was extensive, and had many pathways through it. All, however, were now more or less covered with snow, though here and there the wind had exposed a bare spot, and a large pond on one side glowed in the light of the now rising sun. Riding slowly across the wide common, Amos looked for some time in vain for the person whom he was to meet, and it was almost with a feeling of relief that he contemplated the possibility of no one appearing. The air was sharp and clear now, and, as he gazed on all sides, an inward shrinking from the proposed meeting came over him; and then again the consciousness that he was on duty's path nerved him for whatever might be before him. He had not long to wait. First he heard the far-off faint barking of a dog, and in a few minutes afterwards a horseman made his appearance coming up on to the heath from the opposite quarter to that by which he himself had reached it. The stranger was manifestly in no hurry, but allowed his horse, a big, gaunt, and seedy-looking animal, to take its own time, which clearly was not a very rapid one. The costume of the new-comer was in keeping with the appearance of his steed, being ample but considerably the worse for wear. As the two riders slowly approached each other, Amos recognised his brother-in-law, Mr Orlando Vivian,—there could be no doubt about it. A theatrical salute on the other's part was answered by Amos with a quiet inclination of his head.

"Your servant, friend," then said Mr Vivian in a free and easy manner; "a fine winter's morning you bring with you, though I think we shall have more snow."

"Good morning," returned Amos, not knowing what else to say, and feeling far from comfortable.

When they had remained facing each other for a minute, during which the dark malicious eyes of the player sent a shudder through his companion, the former said, "You are come to see your sister, I presume; at any rate this meeting is clearly by appointment made for that purpose. Shall we proceed?"

"Yes," replied Amos, but with some hesitation in his tone of voice.

"Ah, I understand," said the other; "you were expecting to be conducted to a *tête-à-tête*. You didn't anticipate meeting a brother-in-law as well as a sister,—is it not so?"

Amos hardly knew what to reply, for the bantering air and words of his companion filled him with disgust and repugnance.—"Oh, I see it all—it's perfectly natural," said Mr Vivian sarcastically; "but set your mind at ease on that point, Mr Huntingdon. As soon as you reach the house you will cease to be troubled with my company; nay, I shall not go with you beyond the door."

"I am ready," said Amos calmly.

"Good, then follow me," said the other; and both descended from the heath, and, striking at once out of the more frequented paths, made their way through brier and brushwood till Amos had entirely lost all knowledge of where he was. They had ridden thus about two miles when they suddenly emerged on to some cleared ground, and then came to the side of a large brick-field which had been for some time disused. At one end of the field was a small two-roomed cottage substantially built of rough stone. This had been inhabited formerly by a labourer and his family, the man having been a sort of overlooker while the brick-making was going on. Of course there was a standstill to the manufacture at present, but, to the surprise of Amos, smoke was coming out of the cottage chimney. He was surprised, because, as they rode close up to the building, it looked the last place likely to have a tenant at the present time. Its extreme loneliness also struck him, there being no other building in sight anywhere. As they came just opposite to its outer door, Mr Vivian turned to Amos, and said with a malicious smile, "This, sir, is the house."

"This!" exclaimed the young man, indignant and horrified,—"this the house where my poor sister lives!"

"Even so," was the reply; "any roof to cover you this severe season is surely better than none."

"It cannot be," said Amos; but at that moment the door half opened, and a woman's hand and part of her dress appeared. Then the door was rapidly closed, and he heard from within the sound of weeping and wailing. "It must be so, then," he exclaimed sadly, and proceeded to dismount.

"Don't trouble about your pony," said the player, "I will look after him. Give me the bridle." Amos did so, and was entering

by the low massive door, when to his astonishment a female figure pushed past him into the open air. Then the door was closed upon him, thrusting him forward into the building, while Vivian cried out with a laugh, "*Au revoir, mon ami*—farewell for the present!" The next moment the door was locked, and some heavy weight jammed against it. What could it all mean?

Utterly overwhelmed with dismay, Amos stood for a while as though chained to the spot. Then, opening a door which divided the outermost apartment from the other room, he entered the latter and looked round him. No one was there, neither man, woman, nor child. The walls were very thick, and the room was lighted by a large leaded casement which would open, but there were stout iron bars which would make it next to impossible for any one to get into the cottage that way or escape from it. A fire of wood burned on the hearth, and a small pile of logs was heaped up against the wall near it. On a rough square oak table lay a huge loaf of bread, a considerable mass of cheese, and a quart jug of milk. There was neither chair nor bed in the place. Hurrying into the outer room, Amos found that it was dimly lighted by a very narrow little window, which even a dog could scarcely creep through. There were no upstairs rooms in the cottage. And thus Amos found himself basely entrapped and taken prisoner. And what for? For no good purpose he felt fully assured. He threw open the casement of the inner room and looked out. There was his late companion riding slowly off, and by his side, mounted on his own pony Prince, a female figure. Could that be his sister? and, if so, whither was she going? and what was their purpose, or his wretched betrayer's purpose, with him?

Miserably bewildered, and much cast down, he knelt him down by the table and poured out his care in prayer. That he was in the power of an utterly unscrupulous villain was plain enough,—and what, then, could he do? He had brought with him a small pocket New Testament, with which the Psalms were also bound up, for he had hoped to have read from it to his sister words that might have been of use and comfort to her. But that was not to be. However, he turned over the leaves, and his eyes fell on a verse which he had often read before, but never with so much happy thankfulness as now: "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee."

"Ah, yes," he said aloud, "these words are just sent to me now. *I will* put my trust in Him, for he knows where I am and what errand I am on, and I know that he will deliver me out of this trouble."



Calmed by these thoughts, he once more looked round him. There was a shelf by the fire-place which he had not noticed before. Something lay on it; it was a small desk. Perhaps it belonged to his sister, and might throw some light on his difficulties. He took it down and placed it on the table. The key was in the lock. He opened it, and his eye fell at once on an envelope directed, "Amos Huntingdon, Esquire," but not in his sister's hand. Having undone the envelope, he drew out its contents. These consisted of a note and a blank cheque. The note was as follows:—

"Dear Brother-in-Law,—You have money, and I have none. I want money very much, and you can spare it. I enclose a blank cheque, which I have managed to procure from your bankers. Please fill it up for a hundred pounds. I am sorry to trouble you, but 'necessity has no law,' as the old proverb says. I shall call to-night at the window for the cheque. You will find pen and ink in the desk. Pardon my little bit of eccentricity in bringing you here. When I have got the cheque you will soon be at liberty again, and none the worse, I trust, for your short captivity. I don't wish to proceed to extremities with a relation, but the money I *must* have. Only let me get the cheque, and then, as the poet says, 'My native land, good-night;' I shall trouble you and yours no more.—Your affectionate brother-in-law, Vivian."

The cool audacity of this letter was perfectly staggering to Amos. And yet there was no mistaking the writer's meaning and intentions. It was plain that the reckless adventurer was resolved to extort money from his wife's brother, whom he had succeeded in entrapping, and that remonstrance would be of very little avail with such a character. That the wretched man would do him serious bodily injury Amos did not think probable, but that he would use any pressure short of this seemed tolerably certain. On thinking it over, the young man came to the conviction that his unhappy relation, being hard up for money, and intending probably to go abroad with the help of this hundred pounds, had compelled his sister to write the latter part of her letter, and had then employed some unprincipled female associate to act as his confederate. No doubt he had calculated that it might be a day or two before Amos's friends would become alarmed at his absence, and probably a day or two more before they discovered his prison, especially as the snow would make it more difficult to trace him. In the meantime he trusted to be able so to play upon the fears of Amos, and to wear him out by scanty food and rough lodging, that, sooner than continue in such durance, he would sign the cheque for the amount demanded.

Such was the view that Amos took of the matter, and now came the question what he was to do. He had money enough at his bankers to meet the cheque, and no doubt his father would help him when he knew all the circumstances; but then, was it right to give the man this money? Was he justified in doing so, and thus encouraging a villain in his villainy? The more he thought the matter over, the more firmly he became persuaded that, so long as his own life was not seriously threatened and endangered, he ought to hold out against this infamous demand, and be ready to endure days of privation, suffering, and loneliness, rather than give in to what he was persuaded would be wrong-doing. After much thought and prayer, he came to the decision that he would not give the cheque, but would leave it to God to deliver him, how and when he pleased.

Perfectly calmed by this act of self-committal into his heavenly Father's keeping, he sat down by the fire on a seat which he had raised by piling some of the logs together, and prepared for a long spell of waiting. Whatever others might think, he was sure that his aunt would not be content to let more than one night pass without sending out to seek for him, and by this assurance he was greatly comforted. His bread, cheese, and milk, carefully husbanded, would last him two or three days, and for anything beyond that he did not feel it needful to take any forethought.

Slowly and wearily did the long hours drag on as he paced up and down the room, or sat by the flickering logs, which threw out but a moderate degree of heat. His frugal meals were soon despatched, and at last evening came. He had tried the bars of his window more than once, but his utmost exertion of strength could not shake one of them. No; he must abide in that prison until released from without. And then he thought of noble prisoners for conscience' sake,—Daniel, and Paul, and Bunyan, and many a martyr and confessor,—and he felt that he was suffering in good company. It was just getting dusk when there came a rap at the window. He opened the casement. The face of his cruel jailer was there.

"The cheque," said Mr Vivian, with what was meant to be a winning smile. "Your pony is close by, and I will let you out in a minute. The cheque, if you please."

"I cannot give it," was the reply.

"Indeed!" said the other, raising his eyebrows, and displaying fully the evil light of his wicked eyes. "Ah! is it so? Well, if you like your fare and your quarters so well that you are loath to

leave them, it is not for me to draw you away from such sumptuous hospitality and such agreeable society. Farewell. Good-night. I will call to-morrow morning, in the hopes that a night's rest in this noble mansion may lead you to arrive at a different conclusion. Pleasant dreams to you." So saying, with a discordant chuckle he left the window, and the poor prisoner had to make the best of the situation for the night.

Adding another log to the fire, and wrapping his great-coat together for a couch, with the upper part raised over two or three logs for a pillow, he resigned himself to rest, and, much to his surprise, slept pretty soundly till daybreak. His morning devotions over, and his scanty breakfast eaten, he waited for the return of his brother-in-law with very mingled feelings. About nine o'clock he appeared, and greeted Amos with the hope that he had passed a good night and felt quite himself this morning. Amos replied that he was thankful to say that he had slept as well or better than he expected, and that he only wished that his brother-in-law had had as soft a pillow to lie on as himself had enjoyed.

"Dear me," said the other sneeringly, "I was not aware that the establishment was provided with such luxuries. Pray, of what materials may this pillow of yours have been made?"

"Of the promises of God," said Amos solemnly; "and I can only regret, Mr Vivian, that you will not abandon those ways which God cannot bless, and seek your peace and happiness, as you may do, in your Saviour's service. Why should you not? He has a place in his loving heart for you."

"Is the sermon over, Mr Parson?" asked the other with a snarl. "Oh, very good; and now, let us come to business again. What about the cheque? Is it ready?"

"I cannot give it," was Amos's reply. "I should be wrong to give it. I should only be encouraging evil, and that I dare not do."

"Be it so," said the other; "then, remember, you must take the consequences."

"I am in God's hands," replied Amos, "and am prepared to take them."

"Good again," said his persecutor. "Once more, then, I come. This night, before sunset, I must have the cheque, or else you must abide the consequences."

No more was said, and the young man was again left to his solitude. Had he done right? Yes; he had no doubt on the subject. And now he must prepare himself for what might be his lot, for he had no thought of changing his resolution not to sign the cheque. Having fortified himself by spreading out his case before the Lord in prayer, and strengthened himself physically by eating and drinking a small portion of his now nearly exhausted provisions, he once more examined every place through which it might be possible for him to make his escape, but in vain. Last of all he looked up the chimney, but felt that he could not attempt to make his way out in that direction. He must just wait then; and he turned to some of those promises in the Psalms which are specially encouraging to those who wait, and a strange, unearthly peace stole into his heart.

Noon had passed, but not a sound broke the stillness except the drip, drip from the roof, for a thaw had set in. Three o'clock came. What was that sound? Was the end nearer than he expected? Had his brother-in-law, in his impatience, come earlier than he had said? No. There was the welcome tone of a young voice crying out to some one else. Then Amos sprang to the window, and, opening the casement, shouted out. In a few moments Walter's face met his brother's. "Here he is! here he is!" he screamed out. "Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!" Old Harry came round to the barred window, and, lifting up his hands and eyes, exclaimed, "The Lord be praised!" Then followed rapid questionings. But to these Amos replied, "You shall know all by-and-by; but now I must ask you to set me free. I am a prisoner here. The only outside door is locked, and I cannot undo it; and these bars, which I have tried in vain to force, have prevented my escape this way."—"All right," said his brother. "Come along, Harry."

The two went round to the door and shook it, but to no purpose. A heavy log had also been jammed down against it. This, by their united strength, they with difficulty removed. Again they tried to wrench open the door, but without effect, for it was a huge and ponderous structure, and they could make nothing of it. "Harry must ride over to the nearest village and fetch a blacksmith," said Walter, when he had returned to the window. "Tell him to be quick then, and to bring two or three men with him, for there is danger before us. I cannot tell you more now."—"I'll tell him," replied his brother; and the old servant departed with all speed on his errand. Then Walter came back to the window, and talked long and earnestly with Amos, telling him of the deep concern felt by his aunt and father on account of his prolonged absence. "But," he added,

"I'm not going to tell you now how we found you. We will keep that till we get home, and then shan't we have a regular pour out?"

Wearied at last with waiting, Walter began to make another assault on the front door. It was now getting a little dusk, and he was hoping for Harry's return with the men; so, as he said, partly to see what he could do by himself, and partly to keep himself warm, he proceeded to shower upon the stubborn oak a perfect hail of blows and kicks. He was in the very thick of this performance when he was suddenly made aware that a horseman was close to him. He therefore stopped his exciting occupation, and looked round. The horseman was tall, and of a very sinister expression of countenance, with piercing black eyes. He was also rather fantastically but shabbily dressed.

"What is all this noise about, young gentleman?" asked the stranger. "Why are you battering my property in that wild fashion?"

"Because," replied Walter, rather taken aback by this question, "my brother has been fastened in here by some scoundrel, and I want to get him out."

"You must be dreaming, or mad, my young friend," said the rider; "who would ever think of making a prisoner of your brother in such a place?"

"It's a fact for all that," replied Walter. "He's in there, and he must be got out. I've sent for a blacksmith and some men from the nearest village to burst open the door, and I expect them here directly."

"I can save them that trouble," said the other. "I keep a few odd things—implements and things of that sort—in this cottage of mine, and if by some strange accident your brother has got locked in here, I shall be only too happy to let him out." So saying, he dismounted, and, having hung his horse's bridle over a staple projecting from the stone wall, produced a large key from his pocket, unlocked the heavy door, and threw it wide open.

Walter rushed in and flung his arms round his brother, who gazed at him in some bewilderment, hardly expecting so speedy a release. Then both came to the outside of the building. The stranger had remounted; and then, looking the brothers steadily in the face, he made a low bow, and with the words,

"Good-evening, gentlemen; I wish you a safe and pleasant journey home," turned round, and trotted briskly away.

"Did you notice that man's face?" asked Amos of his brother in a half whisper. "Should you know it again?"—"Anywhere all the world over," was the reply.—"Ah, well," said the other, "I shall have strange things to tell you about him." The next minute Harry and his party came in sight, and, on arriving at the cottage, were astonished and not altogether pleased to find the prisoner at liberty without their assistance. However, the pleasure expressed by Harry, and a little present from Walter, as a token of thankfulness for their prompt appearance, sent them all home well content. And now Amos had to prepare for his return.

"You shall have my pony," said Walter, "and Harry and I will ride doublets on the old mare."

To this Amos having assented—"What has become of poor Prince?" he asked. "Does any one know?"

"All right," said Walter; "Prince is safe at home in the stable. He must have a sack of corn all to himself, for when he came in he was ready to eat his head off. You shall hear all about it."

Having duly clothed himself, Amos was about to mount the pony, when, bethinking himself, he turned back, and secured and brought away the desk, believing that it might possibly be of use in the way of evidence by-and-by. Then all set off, and in due time reached Flixworth Manor, to the great joy of Mr Huntingdon and his sister, and also of many a tenant and neighbour, who were lingering about, hoping for news of the lost one. The first congratulations over, and dinner having been partaken of, at which only a passing allusion was made to the trouble which had terminated so happily, Mr Huntingdon, his sister, and the two young men drew round the drawing-room fire, while Amos gave them a full and minute account of his strange and distressing adventure.

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## **Chapter Fourteen.**

### **Moral Martyrdom.**

When Amos had finished the account of his singular and painful imprisonment, while all united in an expression of their deep

thankfulness, there remained a heavy cloud on the face of Mr Huntingdon. At last he said, slowly and sadly, "And this unmitigated scamp calls our poor Julia wife."

"It is so, dear father," said Amos in reply; "but may we not hope that he will take himself away to America or Australia before long? That seems to be what he has in view, for clearly he has made this country too hot to hold him."

"I only hope it may be so," rejoined Mr Huntingdon, "for it is a miserable business, look at it which way you will."

"Yes," said Walter; "but I am persuaded that my sister was frightened by the man into writing the last part of that letter;—don't you think so, Amos?"

"Yes," replied his brother, "I certainly do. He has been plotting this scheme in order to get me into his power; and when he found that by your coming he had failed in his object, he made the best of matters for himself by pretending to be the owner of the cottage, and to be in ignorance of what had happened to me. And now you must tell me how you found me, and how poor Prince found his way back."

Walter looked up to see if his father or aunt would give the account, and then, when neither spoke, he plunged at once into his narrative.

"You must know, then, that we were all much distressed and perplexed when my father showed us the letter, Amos, which you accidentally dropped, and which we should none of us have read under ordinary circumstances. We knew that you felt it to be your duty to go to poor Julia; but we none of us liked the last part of the letter, and I am sure I can say truly that I had my grievous suspicions from the very first. However, when we got the news of your having set off to this meeting, we could not have prevented it, even if we had thought it right to do so; it would have been too late then. But we did not think it would have been right; and auntie comforted us with the assurance that God would take care of you, as you were gone on a work he must approve of. So we waited patiently—or, as far as *I* was concerned, impatiently—all day, and went to bed with heavy hearts when you did not turn up, and we had heard nothing of you. But father reminded us how you had been absent once before for the night, when you had been summoned to look after those poor children, and that you had come back all safe; so we hoped that we should see you this morning early, or at any rate before luncheon.

"And who do you think was our first messenger? Ah! you will hardly guess. Why, none other than Prince, your pony. We were sitting at breakfast very dull, and imagining all sorts of things, when Harry hurried into the room, as white as if he had just seen a ghost, and cried out, 'Master, master! here's Prince come back all alone, and never a word about poor dear Master Amos!' You may be sure this did just upset us all, and no mistake. I was out in the stable-yard in a moment, and there was Prince sure enough, and all the servants round him; and they had got a stable bucket with some corn in it, and he was devouring it as though he had been starved for a week. 'And where's your master, Prince?' I said. The poor animal only whinnied, but seemed almost as if he understood my question. As for Harry, who had joined me in the yard, he could only blubber out, 'Eh! he's done for, sure enough. They've been and gone and murdered him, and haven't had even the good feeling to send us back his lifeless corpse. Whatever shall we do?' 'Nay, Harry,' I said, 'it hasn't come to that yet; we must go and look after him, and bring him back; he'll turn up all right, I daresay.'—'The Lord grant it,' said the dear old man.

"Well, you may be sure we were all in a pretty state, and at our wits' end what to do. Father set off at once for the police station, and Harry and I started at the same time for Marley Heath."

Here Miss Huntingdon interposed, and said, "And I ought to tell you, dear Amos, that when your father was feeling a little anxious about Walter's going, lest he too should fall into some snare or difficulty, your brother would not hear of any one else taking his place, and rushed away saying, 'It would be a privilege to suffer anything for such a brother as Amos.'"

"Auntie, auntie!" cried her nephew remonstratingly, "you mustn't tell secrets; I never meant Amos to know anything about that."

There was a brief silence, for all the party were deeply moved, and the two brothers clasped hands eagerly and lovingly. Then Walter continued: "So Harry took the old mare, and I took my pony, and we set off soon after breakfast, and got in a little time to Marley Heath; and I can't say I felt very warm to the place, and certainly it didn't *look* very warm to me. 'What's to come next?' I said to Harry. 'Well,' he said, 'we must make inquiries.' That was all easy enough to say, but who were we to make inquiries of? The only living thing about was an old donkey who had strayed on to the heath, and was trying to get a mouthful of something off a bare patch or two; and as we



came up he stared at us as though he thought that we were bigger donkeys than he was for coming to such a place at such a time. It wasn't much use looking about, for there was nothing to guide us. We tried to track your pony's footmarks, but as there had been more snow in the night, and it had now set in to thaw, we could see nothing anywhere in the way of footmarks to trust to. Certainly it was a regular puzzle, for we hadn't the slightest idea which way to turn. 'Well, Harry?' I said. 'Well, Master Walter?' he said in reply; but that didn't help us forward many steps. 'Let us ride on till we get to some house where we may make inquiries,' I said. So we set off, and after a bit came to a farm-house, and asked if any one had seen two people on horseback about, that day or the day before, describing Amos as one. No; they had seen no such riders as we described, therefore we had to trot back to the heath again. 'Well, Harry?' I said again. 'Well, Master Walter?' he replied; and we stared at one another like two—well, I hardly know what to say, but certainly not like two very wise men. So we rode about, first in this direction, and then in that, till we began to be fairly tired.

"It was now getting on for luncheon time, so we made for a farm-house, got some bread and cheese and milk, and a feed for our horses, and then set out again; and weary work we had. At last I was almost giving up in despair, and beginning to think that we had better go home and try some other plan, when, as we were passing near a copse, we saw a tall figure slouching along through the melting snow. The man did not see us at first, but when he looked round and made out who we were, he began to quicken his pace, and strode along wonderfully. There was no mistaking him; it was Jim Jarrocks, the fellow who won my sovereign in that foolish match on Marley Heath. Jim evidently had rather we had not met, for he had a couple of hares slung over his shoulder, which he could not well hide. However, there was no help for it, so he put a bold face on the matter, and touched his hat as I overtook him, and said, 'Your servant, Mr Walter; I hope you're well.' Of course I did not think anything about the hares then, I was too full of Amos; so I asked him if he had seen Amos alone, or with another horseman. 'No, sir,' he replied, 'I've not; but I'll tell you what I've seen. Last night I found Mr Amos's pony, Prince, about a mile from here; he was saddled and bridled, and had broke loose somehow or other, it seemed. So, as in duty bound, I got on him, and rode him over to the Manor-house, and fastened him up in the stable-yard; for it was late, and I didn't like to rouse anybody.'—'All right, Jim,' I said; 'Dick found him when he went to the stables this morning. But whereabouts was it that you found him?'—'Well, it's a queer and awkward road to

get to it,' he said; 'but I can show you the way.'—'And is there any house near where you found Prince?' I asked.—'House! no; nothing of the kind,' said he, 'except the brickmaker's cottage, about a mile further on.'—'And no one lives in that cottage, I suppose?'—'No; and hasn't done for months past;'—then he stopped all of a sudden, and said, 'By-the-by, there was smoke coming out of the chimney of that cottage as I passed it last night; that was strange anyhow.'—'Well, then, Jim,' I said, 'there may be some one in it now, and we can find out if they've seen anything of my brother. Just put us in the way to the cottage; there's a good man.'—'By all means,' he said, and strode on before us for about a mile, and then pointed up a winding lane. 'There,' he cried; 'keep along that lane till you come to an open field, and you'll soon see the cottage; you can't miss it, for there isn't another anywhere about. Good afternoon, sir.' And away he went, evidently glad to get off with his hares as speedily as possible. The rest does not take much telling. We soon came to the cottage, and discovered dear Amos, and encountered that miserable man who has treated him so cruelly. Ah! well, it's been a good ending to a bad beginning."

"Thank you, my dear brother," said Amos warmly; "it was well and kindly done. Yes, God has been very good in delivering me out of my trouble, and specially in making you, dear Walter, the chief instrument in my deliverance."

"I only wonder," said his brother, "that the wretched man did not make off with the pony."

"No," said Amos; "that might have got him into trouble with the police, if they had found the pony in his possession, or had he sold it to anybody. No doubt, when he found the first night that I would not give him the cheque, he just turned the pony adrift, so that, whether he made his way home or any one found him, there would be no clue to the person who had entrapped me."

"I see it all!" cried Walter. "But now we must finish up with a word on moral courage, with an illustration by dear auntie.—Yes, Aunt Kate, you see our hero Amos; you see how he has been ready to make a regular martyr of himself, and surely that is real moral courage."

"Indeed it is so, dear Walter," said Miss Huntingdon; "and you were right in calling your brother's courage a species of martyrdom, for the spirit of a true martyr has been well described as 'a readiness to suffer the greatest evil rather than knowingly to do the least.'"

"Capital, auntie! And now, if father is willing, give us an example."

Mr Huntingdon having gladly given his consent, his sister spoke as follows:—

"My moral hero this time is a real martyr, and a young one. In the spring of the year 1555, a youth, named William Hunter, entered the church of Brentwood, in Essex, to read in the great Bible which stood there chained to a desk for the use of the people. He was an apprentice to a London weaver, but was now on a visit to his native town. He loved the Bible, and it was his joy to read it. As he stood before the desk, a man named Atwell, an officer of the Romish bishop, came that way, and, seeing how he was engaged, remonstrated with him, and then said, when the young man quietly justified himself, 'I see you are one who dislike the queen's laws, but if you do not turn you will broil for your opinions.'—'God give me grace,' replied William, 'to believe his word and confess his name, whatever may come of it.'

"Atwell reported him; he was seized, and placed in the stocks. Then he was taken before Bishop Bonner, who, finding him resolute, ordered him again to the stocks; and there he lay two long days and nights, without any food except a crust of brown bread and a little water. Then, in hopes of subduing his spirit, Bonner sent him to one of the London prisons, with strict orders to the jailer to put as many iron chains upon him as he could possibly bear; and here he remained for three-quarters of a year. At last the bishop sent for him and said, 'If you recant, I will give you forty pounds and set you up in business.' That was a large sum in those days. But William rejected the offer. 'I will make you steward of my own house,' added Bonner. 'But, my lord,' replied the young man, 'if you cannot persuade my conscience by Scripture, I cannot find in my heart to turn from God for the love of the world.' 'Then away with him to the fire!'

"He was to suffer near his native town. There was no prison in the place, so William Hunter was confined in an inn, and guarded by constables. His mother rushed to see him, and his words to her were, 'For my little pain which I shall suffer Christ hath procured for me a crown of joy; are you not glad of that, mother?' On the morning when he was to die, as he was being led from the inn, his father sprang forward in an agony of grief, and threw his arms round him, saying, 'God be with thee, son William.' His son looked calmly at him and said, 'God be with you, father. Be of good comfort; I trust we shall soon meet again where we shall rejoice together.' When he had been

secured to the stake, a pardon was offered him if he would recant. 'No,' he said, 'I will not recant, God willing.' When the fire was lighted, and the flames began to rise, he threw a book of Psalms, which he still held in his hands, into the hands of his brother, who had followed him to the place of death. Then his brother called to him and said, 'William, think on the sufferings of Christ, and be not afraid.'—'I am not afraid,' cried the young martyr. 'Lord, Lord, receive my spirit.' These were his last words. The dry fagots burned briskly, and in a few minutes his sufferings were at an end for ever.

"Here, surely, dear Walter, was moral courage of the highest order. William Hunter was very young; life was sweet; he had loving parents. All the neighbours loved him for his gentle piety. A few words spoken would have saved him from imprisonment, hunger, bitter suffering, and a cruel death; but he would not by a single act or a single word save himself, when by so doing he would be acting against his conscience, much as he loved his home, his parents, and his people."

Walter clapped his hands with delight when his aunt had finished, and exclaimed, "Nothing could be better, Aunt Kate; it suits our hero Amos to a T. Yes, for he would suffer anything rather than get his liberty by doing or promising to do what he believed to be wrong. Thank you, dear aunt; I have learned a lesson which I hope I shall never forget."

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## **Chapter Fifteen.**

### **Walter to the Rescue.**

The day after his return home Amos sought his father in the library. Mr Huntingdon's manner to him had become so much more warm and affectionate, that he now ventured on a course which a few days before he could not have brought himself to adopt.

"Father," he said, "can you spare me a few minutes? I have something on my mind which I feel that I ought to consult you about."

"Sit down, sit down, my dear boy; what is it?" said his father.

Thus encouraged, Amos unburdened his mind. "Father," he proceeded, "I must ask you to excuse my absence for a day or

two, or perhaps even more. You are aware now that I have taken upon myself, for the present at any rate, the charge of my poor sister Julia's little children. And I may also say, as I suppose I ought not to conceal the state of things from you, that her miserable husband has left her utterly destitute, so that I am doing what I can to keep her from want. The man has deserted her more than once; and more than once, when he returned and found money in her possession, he forced it from her. So I have placed what I can spare for her in the hands of a thoroughly trustworthy and Christian woman with whom she lodges, and through this good landlady of hers I see that she does not want such necessities and comforts as are essential to her health."

He was proceeding with his explanation, but was checked by the deep emotion of Mr Huntingdon, who, resting his head between his hands, could not restrain his tears and sobs. Then, springing up from his seat, he clasped Amos to him, and said, in a voice almost choked by his feelings, "My dear, noble boy! and I have misunderstood, and undervalued, and treated you with harshness and coldness all this time! Can you forgive your unworthy father?"

Poor Amos! Such a speech from his father almost stunned him for the moment. At last, recovering himself, he cried, "O father, dear father, don't say such a thing! There is not—there cannot be anything for me to forgive. And, oh! the kindness you have shown me the last few days has made up a thousand times for any little trouble in days gone by."

"You are a dear good boy to say so," replied Mr Huntingdon, kissing him warmly. "Well, now tell me all."

"You see, dear father," continued Amos when they were again both seated, "I am afraid, from poor Julia's letter, that she is in some special trouble. It is true that the latter part of her letter looks very much as if the wretched man had forced her to write it, but the first part is clearly written as she herself felt. I have the letter here. You see, she writes,—'Amos, I'm mad; and yet I am not. No; but he will drive me mad. He will take them both away; he will ruin us all, body and soul.' So far the letter is plainly her own, and there can be no doubt what it means. That vile man has been ill-treating her, and has threatened to take the children from under my charge, though he pledged his honour to myself a short time back that he would not remove them; but, of course, the honour of such a man is worth nothing."

"Yes; I see it all," said the squire with a sigh; "but what can be done? I suppose this unprincipled fellow has a right to the children as their father, and to poor Julia too, as she is his wife."

"True, father; but it will never do to leave her as she is; and I cannot bear the thought of those dear children being left to the tender mercies of such a man."

"Well, and where is your poor sister herself at this time?" asked Mr Huntingdon.

"There, again, I am in a difficulty," said Amos. "When I first got to know how my dear sister was situated, and where she was living, she made me promise that I would not let any one know where the place was, and specially not you. I suppose she was afraid that something would be done against her husband, whom she had a great affection for, if our family knew where she lived; and she also indulged, I grieve to say, much bitterness of feeling towards yourself, which I have done my best to remove. So she would not hear of my telling any one where she is living; and indeed she has moved about from place to place. But I am still under the promise of secrecy."

"Well," said his father, with a sigh, "I will not of course ask you to break your word to her; but better times will come for her, poor thing, I hope."

"I hope so too, dear father. But you will understand now, I feel sure, why I wish to be absent for a day or two, that I may see how things are really going on with her and with the poor children."

"But will it be safe for you to go?" asked his father anxiously. "Will not that villain entrap you again, or do you some bodily harm?"

"I am not afraid, father. My own opinion is that the unhappy man will not remain long in this country; and that, after what has happened these last two days, he will feel it to be his wisdom to keep as clear of me as possible."

"Perhaps so; but I must say I don't like the thoughts of your going alone on such an expedition, after what has already happened."

"Nay, dear father, I believe I ought to go. I believe that duty calls me; and so I may expect that God will take care of me."

"Well, go then, my boy; and, see, take these two ten-pound notes to your poor sister. It is not fair that all the burden should fall upon you. These notes will at any rate keep her from want for a time; she can put them into safe keeping with her landlady. And tell her"—here his voice faltered—"that they are sent her with her father's love, and that there is a place for her here in her old home still."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, dear father," cried Amos; "you *have* made me glad!"

"Yes," continued the squire, "tell her that from me; yet, of course, that does not include *him*."

"Oh no! I thoroughly understand that," replied his son; "and I see, of course, many difficulties that lie in the way; but still, I believe that brighter and happier days are coming for us all."

"May it be so, my dear boy," said the other, again drawing him closely to him. "It will not be *your* fault, at any rate, if they do not come."

So that morning Amos left on his work of love.

He had not been gone many minutes, when Walter knocked at his aunt's door. "Aunt Kate," he began, when he had seated himself at her feet, "I want your advice about a little scheme of mine. It's a good scheme, and perhaps a little bit of moral courage on my part will come out of it."

"Well, my dear boy, let me hear it."

"Father, I know, has been talking to you about Amos," he went on; "all about his noble and self-denying conduct towards my poor dear sister, and that he is going, in consequence of that horrid letter, to see her and those children of hers. I gather this partly from a few words I had with Amos before he started. But then, nobody knows where Julia lives, and nobody knows what that scamp of a fellow may be up to against my dear good brother."

"Yes, Walter," said his aunt, "I understand all that; and I must say that I feel a little anxious about your brother, though I know that he is in better hands than ours."

"Well, auntie, shall I tell you what I have thought of?"

"Do, dear boy."

"If father will let me, I should like to go and keep guard over Amos till he comes back."

"But how can you do that?" asked Miss Huntingdon. "You said just now that no one knows where your poor sister lives except Amos himself; and it would hardly do for you to overtake him, if that could be done, and join yourself to him whether he would or no."

"No, Aunt Kate, that is not my idea. Now, though nobody but Amos knows where Julia lives, I think I know."

"What do you mean?" asked the other, laughing.

"Why, just this. I don't know properly. I'm not supposed to know, and so I take it for granted that I don't know; and yet really I believe I do know."

"My boy, you speak in riddles."

"Ah yes, Aunt Kate, I do; and I see you will never guess the answers to them, so you must give up, and I will tell you. You know that for some time now it has been Amos's place to unlock the post-bag of a morning and give out the letters. The other day, however, he made a mistake, and threw me two which were really directed to him. I gave them back to him, and I saw him turn red when he saw the mistake he had made. I couldn't help noticing the post-mark at the time, and I thought I knew the handwriting on one of the envelopes. The post-mark was the same on each. I am sure now that one was directed by my sister; I know her handwriting well, for I have two little hymns in my desk which she wrote out for me before—before she left us, and I often look at them. And so, putting two and two together, I believe the other was most likely directed by the person in whose house she is living."

"And what was the post-mark?"

"Ah, auntie, I don't think I ought to tell, not even you. It seems like a breach of confidence towards Amos, though it really is not. At any rate, I am not sure that he would like me to tell."

"Quite right, my dear Walter; I had no idle curiosity in asking; and if Amos wishes it still to be a secret, of course you ought not to disclose it."

"Thank you, auntie, for looking at it in that light. Now it can be no breach of confidence on my part to go over to that place



from which the letters came, as shown by the post-mark, and just keep my eyes and ears open, and see if I can get within sight or hearing of Amos without making myself known. I would not intrude myself into my poor sister's house if I can find it out, but I would just keep a bit of a watch near it, and look if I can see anything of that miserable man who has given us so much trouble; and then I might be able to give him a little of my mind, so as to induce him to take himself clean off out of the country. At any rate, I would watch over Amos, that no harm should come to him. What do you think?"

"Well, dear boy," replied his aunt, "it is very generous of you to make such a proposal, and good might come out of your plan; but what will your father say to it?"

"Ah, that's the point, auntie. I must get you to persuade him to let me go. Tell him how it is—tell him I'll be as prudent as a policeman, or a stationmaster, or any one else that's particularly prudent, or ought to be; and, if I don't find Amos where I imagine he will be, I'll be back again before bed-time to-morrow."

Miss Huntingdon spoke to her brother, and put Walter's scheme before him; but at first he would not hear of it. "The boy must be crazy," he said; "why, he's not fit to be out all by himself on such an errand as this. That scoundrel of a man might be getting hold of him, and no one knows what might happen then. It's absurd,—it's really quite out of the question."

"Don't you think, Walter," replied his sister calmly, "that God, who has put such a loving thought into the heart of Walter, will keep him from harm? Would it be right to check him when he is bent on such a work? Besides, as to the wretched and unhappy man who has caused all this trouble, are not such characters, with all their bluster, commonly arrant cowards when they find themselves firmly confronted?"

"Perhaps so, Kate. Well, send Walter to me."

"My boy," exclaimed the squire, when Walter made his appearance, "what wild scheme is this? Why, surely you can't be serious?"

"Indeed I am, father. You needn't be afraid for me. It was not my own thought,—I'm sure it was put into my mind; besides, it will be capital fun just having to look after myself for a night or two, and a little roughing it will do me good."

"And where do you intend to sleep and to put up, I should like to know?" asked Mr Huntingdon, half seriously and half amused.

"Oh, I'll find a shakedown somewhere; and I'm sure to be able to get lots of eggs and bacon and coffee, and I could live on them for a week."

"And I suppose I am to be paymaster," said his father, laughing.

"Oh no, father, not unless you like. I've a sovereign still left; I'll make that pay all, and I must do without things till I get my next quarter's allowance."

"Very well, my boy; but hadn't you better take Harry or Dick with you?"

"O father! take old Harry! why, I might as well take the town-crier. Oh no, let me go alone. I know what Amos would say if it were he that was in my place; he would say that we may trust to be taken care of while we are in the path of duty.—May I go, then, father?"

"Well—yes," said Mr Huntingdon, but rather reluctantly; and then he said, "But how shall I be sure that you haven't got into any trouble? for I understand from your aunt that you make it a point of honour not to let us know where you are going to."

"All right, father: if I don't turn up some time to-morrow afternoon, I'll manage to send a letter by some means or other."

After luncheon Walter set out on his self-imposed expedition, on his own pony, with a wallet strapped behind him which Miss Huntingdon had taken care should be furnished with such things as were needful. His father also thrust some money into his hand as they parted. And now we must leave him as he trots briskly away, rather proud of his solitary journey, and follow his brother, who little suspected that a guard and protector was pursuing him in the person of his volatile brother Walter.

The little town to which Amos leisurely made his way was about twenty miles from Flixworth Manor. It was one of those exceedingly quiet places which, boasting no attractions in the way of either architecture or situation, and being on the road to or from no places of note or busy traffic, are visited rarely by any but those who have their permanent abode in the neighbourhood. Neither did coach pass through it nor railway

near it, so that its winding street or two, with their straggling masses of dingy houses, would be suggestive to any accidental visitor of little else than unmitigated dullness. It had, of course, its post office, which was kept at a miscellaneous shop, and did not tax the energies of the shopkeeper to any great degree by the number of letters which passed through his hands. The stamp, however, of this office was that which Walter had noticed on the letters which had furnished him with a clew.

The heart of Amos was very sad as he rode along, and yet it was filled with thankfulness also. Yes, he could now rejoice, because he saw the dawning of a better day now spreading into broad flushes of morning light. His father's kindness to him, so unexpected and so precious, and, almost better still, his father's altered feeling to his sister Julia—how thoughts of these things gladdened him, spite of his sadness! Oh, if only he could rid the family of that miserable husband of his sister's in some lawful way! Of course it might be possible to put the police on his track; but then, if he were caught and brought to justice, what a lamentable and open disgrace it would be to them all, and might perhaps be the means of partially closing the opening door for his sister to her father's heart.

With such thoughts of mingled cloud and sunshine chasing one another through his mind, he reached, about two o'clock in the afternoon, the little town of Dufferly, and drew rein at the dusky entrance to the Queen's Hotel, as it was somewhat ambitiously called. Having secured a bed, he walked out into the pebbly street, and strolled into the market-place. He might have proceeded at once to his sister's lodgings, but he had no wish to encounter her husband there if he could avoid it; but how to ascertain whether he was in the town or no he could not tell. That he was not likely to remain many days at once in the place he was pretty sure; and yet his sister's letter implied that he had been lately with her, and had been taking some steps towards removing the children from their present place of abode. So he walked up and down the little town in all directions, thinking that if Mr Vivian should be anywhere about, and should catch sight of him, he might retire from the place for a season, and give him an opportunity of visiting his sister unmolested. At length, after returning to his inn and refreshing himself, he made up his mind to call at his sister's home, trusting that he should find her alone.

All was quiet as could be in the little street or lane down which he now made his way. Knocking at the door of the neat but humble dwelling where his sister lived, she herself answered the

summons. "Oh! is it you, Amos?" she cried, clasping her hands passionately together. "Oh, I am so glad, so glad! I want to tell you all, it has been so terrible; come in, come in." Amos entered the little parlour and looked round. He had himself furnished it with a few extras of comfort and refinement. "O Amos, dear, dear Amos," cried his sister, throwing her arms round his neck and weeping bitterly, "it has been so dreadful. Oh pardon me, pray pardon me!"

"What for, dearest Julia?" he asked.

"Why, for writing that last part of the letter. He stood over me; he made me do it. He stood over me with a whip; yes, he struck me over and over again—look at my neck here—he struck me till the blood came, when I refused at first to write as he dictated. But oh! I hope no harm came of that letter?"

"None, dear sister, none. No; the Lord took care of me and delivered me.—But the children—what of them?"

"Oh, I don't know, I'm sure; but I rather think he doesn't mean to move them after all."

"And where is he himself—I mean your—"

"My husband, as he calls himself," she said bitterly. "Oh, he is anywhere and everywhere; sometimes here for a day or two, and then absent for weeks. Indeed, he hardly dares stay for any length of time in any one place, for fear of the police getting hold of him."

"My poor sister!" exclaimed Amos with a sigh; "but, at any rate, *all* is not dark," he added. "I am bringing a little gladness with me. My dear father sends you his love—"

"What—what, Amos!" she exclaimed, interrupting him with almost a shriek. "Oh, say it again! Oh, can it really be?—my father send me his love! Oh, dearest Amos, was it really so?"

"Yes; he knows nearly all now, and his heart has opened to you, and he bids me tell you there is a place for you in the old home still."

Sinking on the ground, the bewildered, agitated creature clasped her hands across her forehead, as though the swollen veins would burst with the intensity of her emotion. At last, yielding to her brother's tender caresses, she grew calmer, and allowing him to draw her close to him, she wept a full flood of

tears, which brought with them a measure of peace in their flow. "Oh! can it be?" she cried again, but now more hopefully—"a place for me yet in the dear old home, and my father's smile on me once more." Then she added in a scared, hoarse whisper, "But that doesn't include *him*?"

"No, not your unhappy husband; my father could not receive him."

"Of course not, Amos. Oh that I had never married him! Every spark of love for him has died out of my heart now. I hate him, and I loathe myself."

"Nay, nay, dear sister," said Amos soothingly, "don't say so. He has sinned, greatly sinned, but all may yet be well."

"Never, never," she cried, "while he claims me for his wife!"

"Well, well," said Amos, "calm yourself, dear Julia. See, here is proof visible of my father's love to you: he has bid me put these two ten-pound notes into Mrs Allison's hands for you. He sends them to yourself, but I am to place them with her, lest they should be taken from you."

"Let me look at them with my own eyes," she cried; and when Amos produced them, she pressed them eagerly to her lips, exclaiming, "Dear, dear father, God bless you for this!"

"And now," said her brother, when she had sufficiently recovered herself to listen to him quietly, "we must consider next what is best to be done. Do you think your husband is likely to be here again soon? and if so, will it be of any use your speaking to him on the subject of your father having expressed his willingness to receive you without him? Would he be willing to leave you to us now, and to go abroad himself to some distant land? and do you yourself really desire this separation?"

"Desire it, Amos! how can I help desiring it? Though marrying him lost me home and almost everything I once loved, yet I could have followed him all the world over if he had really loved me. But he hates me; he takes a spiteful pleasure in ill-treating me. He would never come near me at all, if he did not think that he could manage to squeeze some money out of me. How *can* I have any love left for such a wretch?"

"But will he be willing to leave you in our hands? Remember you are still his wife, and he has therefore a claim upon you."

"I know it, Amos, too well. Oh! what can I do?"

"Well, I can hardly tell; but I am remaining in the town to-night, and as it is now getting late, I will go to my room at the inn, and will come and see you again to-morrow morning, by which time I shall have got more light on the subject, I have no doubt." So they parted.

As Amos walked into the inn-yard to have a last look at his pony, he saw a young man advancing towards him; but as it was now getting dark, he could not at first make out his features. A moment more, and he recognised his brother.

"What, Walter!" he exclaimed in astonishment; "how did *you* come here?"

"Oh, very comfortably indeed!" was the reply. "I have ridden over on a little private business of my own—in fact, I may tell you in confidence that I am at present a member of the mounted police force, and am on duty to-night in the noble town of Dufferly, keeping my eye on a certain person who is running his head into danger, and wants carefully looking after, lest he get himself into mischief." Amos looked puzzled. "In other words," continued his brother, "I could not bear the thought of your getting again into the clutches of that horrid man; so I have come over, not to be a spy upon you, or any fetter on your movements, but just to be at hand, to give you a help if you want it."

"How generous of you, dear Walter!" cried his brother, shaking him warmly by the hand; "but does my father know?"

"Of course he does, and my aunt too. It's all right. You are captain, and I'm only lieutenant; and now, what's the next move?"

"Well, to have some tea together in my room, Walter. But really your coming was quite unnecessary. I shall be taken care of without your needing to put yourself to all this trouble. However, as you *are* here, I begin to see that good may come of it. So let us have tea, and then you must tell me how you found me out, after which I will tell you what is in my mind." So the brothers had a cozy meal together, and then Amos told Walter about his interview with their sister, and having taken him fully into his confidence, discussed with him what was best to be done under the sad circumstances.

"If I could only get hold of that rascally scamp!" said Walter, with an inclination of his head which implied that nothing would give him more intense satisfaction.

"I am afraid," said his brother, "that would not help us much: the thing that would do us all good is not to get hold of him, but to get rid of him. Unfortunately, however, he knows the hold he has upon us through poor Julia, and I fear that he will leave no stone unturned to accomplish his own objects through her directly or indirectly."

"And can't we set the police on him?"

"I daresay we could, Walter; but what a disgrace it would be to have him exposed and brought to justice!"

"Ah, I see that. Well, Amos, we must see if we cannot frighten him away for good and all."

His brother shook his head. "He knows very well, you may be sure," he said, "that for Julia's sake and our own we shall not drag him out into the light, with all his sins and misdemeanours, for the public to gaze at, if we can help it; and yet I think he may perhaps be induced to retire of his own accord and settle abroad, if he finds that we are both of us determined to keep him in view. Suppose, then, we go together to poor Julia's tomorrow. Oh, how delighted she will be to see you once again! And we can get her to make her husband understand that we are both of us keeping our eyes open about him, and that unless he takes himself off at once, and gives up his poor abused wife into our keeping, and leaves her there, we shall bring him to justice, let the disgrace be what it may."

"Well, Amos," replied Walter, "I can see no better plan; so if agreeable to you I will have the happiness of going with you tomorrow to my dear sister's."

The next morning, accordingly, the two brothers stood at the door of Julia Vivian's humble dwelling. The landlady answered the bell, and said that her lodger was still in her bedroom, having passed a very disturbed night, but that, if they would come in, she would soon come down to them. In a few minutes the parlour door slowly opened, and Julia, deadly pale, a wild light in her eyes, and her hands trembling with excitement, made her appearance. She advanced with hesitating steps towards Amos, behind whom stood Walter, partly hidden by his brother; but as his sister caught sight of her younger brother, the colour rushed into her face, and with a wild cry she sprang

into his arms. "Walter! O Walter, Walter! is it really you? Oh, this is too much happiness.—Amos, you never told me of this."

"No, my dear sister, because I did not know of it myself. But calm yourself now. You look so very ill, I am afraid the excitement has been too much for you."

"No, no!" she cried, with a look of terror in her eyes, "it is not that,—seeing you both is nothing but joy; it would make me well and ready for anything. But—but *he* has been here since I saw you yesterday, Amos. He found out from my manner that something had happened, and he made me tell that you had been here. And then he asked if you had said anything about money; and, when I hesitated, he threatened and threatened till he forced it out of me that my dear father had sent me those notes. He went off again last night, and said that he should like to meet you this morning, and that perhaps something might be arranged to the satisfaction of all parties."

"Then you told him that I was coming again this morning?"

"Yes; he dragged it from me by his sharp and cruel questioning. But he is not coming till twelve o'clock."

"And where is he now?"

"I cannot tell. He never lets me know where he is going to, or how long he means to stay away."

"I will meet him here, then," said Amos; "perhaps we may now really come to some understanding which will get us out of our difficulties."

"And what about me?" asked Walter. "I have come over here in the character of a policeman in plain clothes to watch over my brother Amos, and I don't want that precious blackguard—I beg your pardon, Julia, I mean your husband—to have any more *tête-à-têtes* with my charge unless I am by. Can you hide me away in some corner where I can hear and see all that is going on without being seen myself?"

"Would that be right?" asked his brother hesitatingly.

"Perfectly right," said Walter, "so long as *you* are willing that I should hear what passes between you. I'm not fond of acting the spy, but this is simply taking reasonable precautions to prevent an honest man being entrapped or injured by a rogue."



"Yes," said his sister, "I am afraid what you say is too true. I would not answer for what Orlando might do at any time. So I think I can place you where you can observe and hear what is going on without being observed yourself."

Having said this, she led the way into another room on the opposite side of the passage, which was usually occupied by the owner of the house, but which she had this morning lent to her lodger for her use, as it was rather larger than the one Mrs Vivian occupied, and more convenient for the reception of a visitor. On the farther side of this apartment was a door leading out to the back part of the house. It was seldom used now, and a curtain hung before it, as the weather was cold and a strong current of air came through it. In an upper panel of this door was a small glass window, now disused, for some alterations had been made in the back premises which blocked out the light. The panes of this window had been pasted over and covered by paper similar in colour to the door, so that the existence of any glass there would not have been suspected by any ordinary observer.

When this door and its window had been shown to Walter, what he should do flashed upon him at once. "May we take the landlady in a measure into our confidence?" he asked.

"Yes," said his sister, "I am sure you may. She knows my trials and troubles too well."

Amos having assented, Mrs Allison was called, and it was explained to her that Walter wished to watch behind the door unobserved, and to be able, if possible, to see as well as hear what was going on in the room during the interview between his brother and brother-in-law. The good woman, at once comprehending the situation, gave cheerful leave to Walter to take his stand where he proposed, promising that no one should interrupt; and then with her own hands scratched with an old pair of scissors two small round holes in the paper which had been pasted on the small window, such as would not attract the notice of any one in the room, but through which Walter would be able to see everything that was going on inside.

A few minutes before twelve he duly took his stand behind this disused door. The curtain had previously been removed by the landlady, so that any conversation in the room could be readily heard through the not over tight-fitting woodwork. Anxiously did the young man wait for the coming interview. He was not kept long in suspense. A loud ring at the front door was followed by the sound of a heavy stalking tread. Mr Orlando

Vivian entered the other parlour, whither Amos and his sister had retired, and saluted the former with an offhand, swaggering assumption of politeness.

"Your servant, Mr Huntingdon," he said. Whose ever *servant* he might be, at that moment he was clearly the *slave* of strong drink.

Amos bowed.

"I hope you find your sister well, Mr Huntingdon," he added; "it is very kind of you to visit us in our humble dwelling."

The other replied that he did not find his sister looking as well as he had hoped, but trusted that she might soon be better.

"The better for my absence, I suppose you mean," said his brother-in-law sneeringly.

Amos made no reply.

"Well, sir," continued the wretched stroller, whose swaggering manner was evidently merely assumed, "every man's house is his castle, and therefore mine must be so too. I haven't much to offer you in the way of welcome just now, but, before we part, I should like a word in private with you.—Is the other room occupied?" he asked of his wife.

"No; Mrs Allison has put it at my service this morning."

"Then, Mr Huntingdon, will you be so good as to follow me?" Saying which, he led the way to the other parlour, and, when they had entered, locked the door, to the surprise and not particular satisfaction of Amos, who gave just one glance at the little window, and thought he saw two eyes peeping through the little holes.

"Pray be seated," said the player.

Amos accepted the invitation and sat.

"You have brought some money, I understand, from my father-in-law for his daughter," began Mr Vivian abruptly.

"I have," said the other, after his questioner had waited a minute or so for a reply.

"Would you have the goodness to hand it to me?" continued the player.

"I brought it," replied Amos, "for my sister's own private use and benefit, and cannot therefore give it to you."

"Ah, indeed!" said the other sarcastically; "but you know, sir, that a wife's goods belong to her husband, who, as I think the Bible has it, is the head of the wife, so that what is hers is his, and indeed his more than hers."

"Perhaps so, under ordinary circumstances," replied Amos; "but this is a free gift from a father to a daughter, and I am sure no kind or reasonable husband would wish to deprive her of it."

"Deprive, sir? No,—deprive is not the word. Husband and wife are one, you know: the wife is the weaker vessel, and the husband the stronger; and it is only right and natural that the stronger should have the money, that he may use it for the benefit of the weaker."

"Mr Vivian," said Amos firmly, "all this, and you must know it, is mere idle talk. I cannot give you the money."

"And I on my part say, sir," replied the other, "that I must have it. I want it. I cannot do without it."

"I have told you my decision," said Amos.

"Indeed," said the other. "Then I am driven to an unpleasant line of persuasion, though very reluctantly."

He rose, and Amos did the same.

"Do you see this?" he said, taking from his pocket a revolver.

"I do," said Amos.

"Should I be disposed to use this by way of compulsion, what would you say?"

"That I am in God's hands and not in yours," replied Amos, looking Vivian full in the face, who quailed before the calm, steady gaze of the young man.

Neither spoke for half a minute; then the unhappy stroller stepped back, and began to raise his right arm. The next instant the disused door was dashed open, and Walter sprang upon his

astounded brother-in-law with the fury of a tiger. The pistol flew from Vivian's hand, and he fell to the ground. Walter, who was full of vigour and activity, pinned him down, and called to Amos to give him one of the bell ropes. With this, being assisted by his brother, he pinioned the prostrate man so that he was utterly helpless.

"Now," said Walter, "let us search the villain's pockets." He did so, and discovered a second revolver. "What's to be done now?" he asked; "shall we hand him over at once to the police?"

At this moment his sister, having heard the scuffle, tried the door. Amos unlocked it. What a sight presented itself! "Oh, what does it all mean?" she cried.

"Why, just this," exclaimed her brother. "This dastardly villain—I must call him so—has been threatening to shoot Amos because he would not give him the money that was sent by my father to you."

"Oh, misery! misery!" cried the unhappy wife, hiding her face with her hands.

"Let me get up; untie the rope," wailed the unhappy Vivian, now utterly crestfallen and abject. "I meant your brother no harm; I only intended to frighten him. The pistols are neither of them loaded."

"It may be so," said Walter. "Well, get up," and he helped him to rise. "Now sit down in that chair and listen to me. You've behaved like a brute, and worse than a brute, to my poor sister; you have cruelly trapped my dear noble brother, and would have murdered him if you had dared. The simplest thing would just be to send for a policeman and give you into his charge. But I don't want to do this for my poor sister's sake and the family's sake. But now I've made up my mind—come what may, disgrace or no disgrace, if you show your face amongst any of us again, the constable shall have you, and you shall get your deserts. We've got a home for our sister at the old place, and Amos has got a home for the children. Now if, after I've set you free, you turn up anywhere near us or the children, we'll make no more bones of the matter; you shall get your deserts, and these will be the deserts of a mean, cowardly, rascally wife-beater, to say the best of you."

Not a word of reply did the guilty man make to this speech. He writhed in his chair, and looked utterly humbled and crushed.

When Walter—who had now, with the tacit consent of Amos, taken the management of matters into his own hands—had examined the pistols, which proved to be unloaded, he approached his brother-in-law once more, and said, with less excitement, "Now, Mr Orlando Vivian, I am going to release you, and you will have the goodness to take yourself out of this town before you are an hour older, else you will have to take the consequences." Having said this, he proceeded to unfasten the cord which bound the degraded and spirit-broken wretch. When this had been accomplished, the baffled stroller rose, and, with head hanging down, and without a word uttered, left the house.

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## **Chapter Sixteen.**

### **Back to the Old Home again.**

"I shall remain here with poor Julia," said Amos to his brother, when their unhappy sister, completely overcome by the terrible scene she had just witnessed, had retired to her bedroom, where she was lovingly tended by her kind landlady.

"And what is the next move for me?" asked Walter.

"Well," replied Amos, "you have done your part most nobly, and I am so thankful now that you came. Not that I think that wretched man would really have harmed me. He just wanted to frighten the money out of me; but I believe, on finding me firm, and not to be frightened, he would have dropped his pistol, and made some shuffling attempt to turn the matter into a joke, and would then have tried to wheedle the money out of me, when he saw that a show of violence would not do. Still, I am truly glad that you were here, and that things have turned out as they have done. I feel sure now that you have thoroughly humbled this unprincipled scoundrel, and that he has slunk away like a whipped hound, and I have every hope that he will not trouble poor Julia any more with his odious presence. As he knows now that there are two of us keeping watch, and must remember what you have said to him, I fully believe that he will take himself off to a distance, if not go abroad, and that we need not be afraid of his annoying us any more either here or at Flixworth Manor."

"That's pretty much what I think too," replied his brother; "but what am I to say at home?"

"Just what you like. But as to our dear sister, I want you to express to my father her delight and gratitude when I gave her his love, and told her that there was still a place for her in the old home. And then would you find out from him or through our aunt how soon she may come back to us? for I want to get her out of this place. When she is once in her old home again she will be safe out of the clutches of her cruel husband. I will wait here for an answer, which you can send me by post; and, should that answer warrant poor Julia's return at once, I will see all things got ready, and will bring her myself. And, should there be anything in the way of her returning immediately, I can remove her for a time to where her children are, as I shall be better able to keep my eye upon her there."

"All right, Amos; I'm not afraid of leaving you here now, for I am as fully persuaded as you are that Mr Vivian has had such a lesson as he won't forget in a hurry, and that he will make himself pretty scarce for some time to come. You shall hear from me by to-morrow's post.—Ah, but there's another thing: am I to say anything about the children? for if poor Julia is to come back we shall have to make room for the children as well."

"Nay, dear Walter," said his brother, "I think it would be better to say nothing about the children; they are safe and happy where they are. Let us leave the matter to our dear father. When Julia has got her old place in his house and heart back again, I feel sure that it will not be long before he bids her himself send for the children. Don't you think it will be better that it should come from himself?"

"Just so, Amos; you are right, as usual. Well, this is a capital ending to a queer beginning. And what will old Harry say to see 'Miss Julia as was' turning up 'Mistress Julia as is'? Oh, won't it be capital fun to see him welcome her back!" So Walter set off on his homeward journey in high spirits, and in due time reached his destination brimful of news and excitement.

"All well, I hope?" asked his father, who, with his aunt, met him in the hall on his arrival.

"Oh yes, father, it's all well, and a deal better than all well—it's all best." Then the three gathered round the fire in Mr Huntingdon's library, and Walter told his story. Deep was the emotion of Mr Huntingdon and his sister, and deeper still their thankfulness, when they heard of the happy conclusion of the terrible and exciting meeting between Amos and his brother-in-law.

"And you did nobly and wisely yourself, my dear boy," said the squire. "I believe you have given that wretched scoundrel his quietus so far as we are concerned.—And what of your poor sister? Are we to expect her soon?"

"That's what I've got to write to Amos about," replied his son. "As soon as you are ready to receive her she will be only too thankful to come."

"Let her come at once—write by this night's post," cried his father in an agitated voice. "Poor dear child, I long to welcome her back again; and I think, if I am not mistaken, that your aunt has been making some quiet preparations, so that it will not be inconvenient to you, Kate, for her to come at once, will it?"

"Not in the least," replied his sister; "I have been earnestly hoping and praying for this."

"And what about the children?" said her brother; "we must make room for them too, poor things. We can't keep the mother and her children separate."

"Of course not, dear Walter," replied Miss Huntingdon; "we shall be quite prepared to receive them also, though they are at present not with their mother, but under Amos's charge."

"Ah, I remember," said her brother; "well, we can send for them too, when the poor child herself has got here."

"Am I to write all that?" asked Walter.

"Oh, certainly," was the reply.

"Then hip, hip, hurrah forty-four thousand times! And now I will write the letter; and then I'll have a fine bit of fun with Harry." So the letter was written and duly posted that evening; and Walter, after he had finished it, betook himself to the butler's pantry.

"Harry," he said to the worthy old servant, who, wash-leather in hand, was burnishing the plate with all the solemnity of one engaged in some very serious and responsible undertaking, "what do you think?"

"Well, Master Walter, I think a good many things."

"I daresay you do. But what do you think *now*?"

"Why, pretty much what I've been thinking of for the last half-hour; and that ain't much to the purpose to any one but myself."

"Just so, Harry; well, I'm not going to offer you a penny for your thoughts, but I'm sure you would give a good many pence for mine. However, I'll make no charge on the present occasion, but will tell you out at once—Miss Julia that was is coming back to us to her old home, perhaps to-morrow or next day. My father has sent for her. Now, isn't that stunning?"

It certainly looked so in Harry's case, for the old man dropped a large silver fork on to the ground, and stood, with his mouth and eyes wide open, staring at Walter, the very picture of amazement.

"All, I thought so," said Walter. "Well, Harry, it's true. Isn't that good news?"

Yes; it was joy and gladness to the faithful old servant's heart. One big tear after another rolled down his cheeks, and then he said in a low voice, "The Lord be praised! I've prayed as it might come to this some day; and so it has at last. And you're sure of it, Master Walter; you're not a-cramming of me?"

"Nothing of the sort, Harry; I couldn't have the heart to do it. No, it is perfectly true. And now, what shall we do? Shall we pile up a great bonfire, and light it the same night she comes back? What do you say to that?"

"I don't know, Master Walter, I don't know. Somehow or other it don't seem to me quite suitable. I think master would hardly like it. You see, it isn't as if she'd been and married a creditable person, or were coming back after all had gone on straight and smooth like. There's been faults on both sides, maybe; but it seems to me as we'd better do our rejoicing in a quieter sort of way, and light the bonfires in our hearts, and then we shan't give offence to nobody."

"Harry, I believe you're right," said Walter. "You're a regular old brick, and nothing but it; thank you for your sensible advice."

When dinner was over, and Miss Huntingdon had retired for a few minutes to her own room, she received a visit from Walter. "Auntie," he said, "I am come for a lesson on moral courage, and for a little encouragement. Now, you know all the circumstances of our grand scene with that shocking scoundrel



at Dufferly; so you must tell me who is your special hero for moral courage in whose steps Amos trode on that occasion."

"Yes, I can do that, my dear boy," replied his aunt; "but, first of all, I must speak a word of congratulation and praise to another hero—my dear nephew Walter."

"Nay, aunt," he replied, "I don't think there was much moral courage about it in my case. My blood was up when I saw Amos's life threatened, and I should have pitched into the cowardly wretch if he had been as tall as a lighthouse and as big as an elephant."

"True, dear boy, that was natural courage principally; but there was moral courage too in your whole conduct in the matter, in the steady perseverance with which you went to be your brother's protector, come what might and at all hazards."

"Thank you, dear aunt, but you have given me more praise than I deserve. And now for the special hero, the counterpart of Amos."

"My hero this time," said Miss Huntingdon, "is a very remarkable man, a most excellent clergyman, Mr Fletcher of Madeley. He had a very profligate nephew, a military man, who had been dismissed from the Sardinian service for base and ungentlemanly conduct, had engaged in two or three duels, and had wasted his means in vice and extravagance. One day this nephew waited on his uncle, General de Gons, and, presenting a loaded pistol, threatened to shoot him unless he would immediately advance him five hundred crowns. The general, though a brave man, well knew what a desperado he had to deal with, and gave a draft for the money, at the same time expostulating with him freely on his conduct. The young madman rode off triumphantly with his ill-gotten cheque. In the evening, passing the door of Mr Fletcher, he determined to call on him, and began by telling him how liberal General de Gons had been to him, and, as a proof, exhibited the draft. Mr Fletcher took it from his nephew, and looked at it with astonishment. Then, after some remarks, putting it into his pocket, he said, 'It strikes me, young man, that you possessed yourself of this note by some indirect method; and in honesty I cannot return it without my brother's knowledge and approbation.' The young man's pistol was immediately at his uncle's breast. 'My life,' said Mr Fletcher, with perfect calmness, 'is secure in the protection of an Almighty Power, nor will he suffer it to be the forfeit of my integrity and your rashness.'—This firmness staggered his nephew, who exclaimed, 'Why,

Uncle de Gons, though an old soldier, was more afraid of death than you are.'—'Afraid of death!' cried Mr Fletcher. 'Do you think I have been twenty-five years the minister of the Lord of life, to be afraid of death now? No, sir; it is for *you* to fear death. Look here, sir, the broad eye of Heaven is fixed upon us; tremble in the presence of your Maker, who can in a moment kill your body, and for ever punish your soul in hell.'—The unhappy man turned pale, and trembled first with fear and then with rage. He still threatened his uncle with instant death. Mr Fletcher, however, gave no alarm and made no attempt to escape. He calmly conversed with his miserable nephew; and at last, when he saw that he was touched, addressed him like a father till he had fairly subdued him. But he would not return his brother's draft. However, he gave him some help himself, and having prayed with him, let him go."

"Ay, dear aunt," exclaimed Walter, "that was a hero indeed."

"Yes, Walter, a true moral hero; for, if you remember, moral courage is the bravery shown, not in acting from sudden impulse, nor from 'pluck,' as you call it, nor from mere animal daring, but in deliberately resolving to do and doing as a matter of principle or duty what may cost us shame, or loss, or suffering, or even death. Such certainly was Mr Fletcher's courage. A sense of duty and the fear of God upheld him against all fear of man."

"True, auntie," acquiesced her nephew; "and so it was with Amos."

"Yes, just so, Walter. You tell me that when your unhappy brother-in-law pointed the pistol at Amos, your brother said with perfect calmness that he was in God's hands, and not in the hands of Mr Vivian. In thus acting from duty, and deliberately hazarding the loss of his own life rather than do what his conscience disapproved of, Amos exhibited, like Mr Fletcher, the most exalted moral courage."

"Thank you, dear aunt; and I am so glad that I have been permitted to help my hero out of his trouble."

On the third day after this conversation, the post brought the welcome news from Amos that he should bring his sister that afternoon to her old home, and that her children would follow in a day or two. Seven years had elapsed since the erring daughter had left sorrow and shame behind her in her home, by suddenly and clandestinely quitting it, to become, without the sanction of father or mother, the wife of a specious but

profligate and needy adventurer. And now, sad and forsaken, she was returning to a home which had for a long time been closed against her. Oh, with what a wild throbbing of heart did she gaze at the familiar sights which presented themselves to her on all sides, as she and Amos drove along the well-known roads, in through the great green gates, up the drive, and then, with a sudden pull up, to the front door. The next moment she had sprung on to the door-steps with an eager cry, and found herself clasped in her father's arms.

"My poor, poor child! welcome home again," he murmured, with choking tears.

"O father! father!" she cried, "it is too much happiness." She could say no more.

Then she received the warm embrace of her aunt, who was saddened to mark the lines of care on that young face, which was all brightness the last time she had seen it. And then, as she raised herself up, and disengaged herself from those loving arms, her eyes fell on the old butler, who was twisting a large red pocket-handkerchief into a rope, in his vain efforts to restrain his emotions, which at last found vent in a long cadence of mingled sobs and exclamations. For a moment Julia Vivian hesitated, and then flung her arms round the neck of the old man, who made the hall ring with a shout of thanksgiving. Then, calming down, he said, half out loud, and half confidentially to himself, "You know it was to be so, and so it is. We've got Miss Julia as was back among us again; and we don't mean to part with her never again no more."

Oh, what a day of gladness was that to Amos Huntingdon! One half of the great purpose to which he had devoted his life was now accomplished. The banished sister had been welcomed back by his father to her earthly home. And yet, how much still remained to be done! But, as he had worked on in faith and trust before, so he would continue trusting, watching, working, committing all to the wise guiding and overruling of that loving Father whose leading hand he had hitherto sought to follow, but never to outrun.

How bright were the faces which gathered round the dinner-table that evening!—though even then the cloud rested in a measure on every heart; for that poor worn face, and those wistful pitiful eyes, told of a deep and hidden sorrow, and of an abiding humiliation, which not even the pure love that now beamed on her from all sides could remove from the burdened spirit of the restored wanderer. Down in the kitchen, however,

the rejoicing was unclouded, except that Harry mourned over his young mistress's faded beauty and sad looks, and occupied a considerable portion of his leisure time in punching an imaginary head, held firm under his left arm, and supposed by his fellow-servants to belong to Miss Julia's brute of a husband.

Dinner had been over rather more than an hour, when Walter, who had been absent for a short time from the drawing-room, returned, beckoned to Amos, and then, gently laying hold of his sister's hand, drew her towards the door. "Come here, just for one minute," he said, with a merry smile twinkling in his eyes. "Father will spare you just for a minute;" and he conducted her out of the room. Oh, what a flood of joy came into her heart with that smile of Walter's. Years had passed since she had rejoiced in its light. What would she have given could the frightful interval between this smile and the last she had seen before it have been wiped clean out! To her that interval had been one prolonged and gloomy frown. But now the three, Amos, Walter, and their sister, made their way downstairs. Oh, it was so like a bit of childish fun in days gone by! And now they arrived at the butler's pantry, the door of which was fast closed. Walter knocked. "Come in," said the old man. They entered; and all exclaimed at the sight which presented itself. On every available projection there was placed a portion of a candle, making in all some thirty or forty lights, which made the little room one brilliant blaze. On the wall opposite the door were the words, "Welcome home again," in large red and blue letters; and on another wall the words, "Hip, hip, hooray!" in golden characters.

"O dear Harry!" cried his young mistress, her face glowing with such a smile as no one had seen on it yet since her return, "how good and kind of you—just like your dear old self! how came you to think of it?"

"Well, Miss Julia," was his reply, "it's this way,—Master Walter and me talked about having a bonfire on the hill; but when we came to think it over, we decided as it wouldn't p'r'aps be altogether the right thing, for reasons as needn't be named on this here occasion. So I've been and got up a little bit of an illumination all of my own self. But don't you go for to suppose as these candles belongs to master. I'm not the man to use his goods this way without leave. It's a pound of the best composite as I bought out of my own wages, and you're heartily welcome to every one on 'em."

"Thank you, dear Harry," she said, holding out her hand to him; "it is the sweetest of welcomes. I feel that it has done me good already; there is true love in every light."

"Just so, miss," said the old man, his face brimming over with happiness. "And now, before we part, we must have a bit of toffee all round, as you was used to in old times." So saying, he opened an old drawer, which seemed abundantly furnished with sundry kinds of sweets, and produced the toffee, which he pressed upon each of his three visitors. "There," he said in a tone of deep satisfaction, "that's just as it should be; and now, Miss Julia," he added, "when you want any more, you know where to come for it."

Few happier hearts were laid on a bed that night in England than the heart of old Harry the butler.

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## **Chapter Seventeen.**

### **True Shame versus False Shame.**

While Amos rejoiced greatly in the return of his sister, there was much still to be accomplished before his great object could be fairly said to be attained, even in her case. Nothing could be kinder than Mr Huntingdon's treatment of his restored child; and when her little ones joined her, it seemed as if the pent back affections of the squire were coming forth in such a rush as would almost overwhelm his grandchildren with a flood of indulgence. Brighter days, then, had come; nevertheless, Amos could not help seeing much in the character and conduct of both his sister and Walter which saddened him. Acting himself on the highest of all principles—the constraining love of the heavenly Master—he could not be content till the same holy motive should have its place in the hearts of those he so dearly loved.

Sorrow had subdued and softened in Julia the less amiable features in her character; while all that Amos had done and suffered and was still doing for herself and her children could not but draw out her heart to him. But yet, while she loved and respected Amos, she just simply dearly loved Walter; towards him the deeper and tenderer feelings of her heart went forth. And Walter himself—though Amos was the object of his warmest admiration, and, in a certain sense, of his imitation—was far from adopting the standard and motives of his brother. To do simply what his conscience told him to be right, when

such a course would cut the prejudices of his gay worldly friends across the grain, was a thing he was by no means prepared for; and here he had his sister's sympathy. Not that she openly advocated a worldly and compromising line of conduct—for indeed she was too glad to leave for a while argument and outspoken opinions to others—but she made him feel in her private conversations with him that the world and its ways and maxims were still her own guide and standard.

Amos could see this more or less, and he deeply deplored it; but he trusted still that prayer, patience, and perseverance would yet bring his beloved brother and restored sister to look at duty and wisdom in the light of God's Word. And Walter gave him at times much encouragement. He could no longer despise Amos, nor pride himself in his own superiority to him. The beauty of his elder brother's character, the nobleness of his aims, the singleness of eye that was manifest in him, his unselfishness and patience, these traits had won the unfeigned admiration of Walter, an admiration which he was too generous not to acknowledge. But yet, all the while, he rather fretted under Amos's rigid consistency, remarking to his sister that really it was a bit of a bondage to have to be always so very good, and that one must not be so over-particular if one was to get on with people who were not yet exactly angels. But still, he was vexed with himself when he had made such observations, and resolved in his heart to be more circumspect for the future.

When Julia Vivian had been some weeks in her old home, Walter exclaimed one morning as they were sitting at breakfast, "What do you think? Gregson is getting up a raffle for his beautiful mare Rosebud."

"Indeed," said his father, "how comes that? I thought the young man had only had her a short time."

"Why, father," replied Walter, "I imagine the fact is that Gregson's purse is getting worn into a hole or two."

"I understood," remarked Miss Huntingdon, "that his father was a very wealthy man, and allowed his son, as you used to put it, no end of money."

"True, aunt; but I think he has been betting and losing pretty heavily lately, and finds he must pull up a bit."

"And so he is going to part with his mare by raffle," said the squire; "pray what does he want for her?"

"Oh, a hundred guineas—and very cheap, too. Will you put in, father?"

"Not I, my boy; I cannot say that I am very fond of these raffles."

"Well, Amos," said Walter, turning to his brother, "what does your worship say?"

Amos shook his head.

"Nay, don't be ill-natured," said the other. "It's a guinea a ticket: I'll take one, and you can take one, and if I win I'll pay you back your guinea, for then I shall get a horse worth a hundred guineas for two guineas; and if *you* win, you can either keep the mare or hand her over to me, and I will pay you back your guinea."

"And suppose we neither of us win?" asked Amos.

"Oh, then," replied his brother, "we shall have done a good-natured thing by giving Gregson a helping hand out of his difficulties, for it will take a good deal of hunting up to get a hundred names for the raffle."

"But, my boy," said the squire, "remember there's some one else to be considered in the matter. I can't undertake to keep two horses for you; you have your own pony already."

"All right, father; there'll be no difficulty there. I can sell my own pony, and Rosebud won't eat more nor take up more room than poor Punch; and I shall put a few sovereigns into my own pocket too by selling my own pony."

"That is to say, if you are the winner, my boy; but there will be ninety-nine chances to one against that."

"Oh yes, I know that, father; but 'nothing venture, nothing win,' says the proverb.—Well, Amos, what do you say? will you be one?"

"I cannot," said his brother gravely.

"Oh, why not?" asked his sister; "it will be so nice for dear Walter to have that beautiful creature for his own."

"I do not approve of raffles, and cannot therefore take part in one," replied Amos.

"Why, surely," she exclaimed, "there can be no harm in them."

"I cannot agree with you there, dear Julia," he said. "I believe raffles to be utterly wrong in principle, and so there must be harm in them. They are just simply a mild form of gambling, and nothing got by them can be got fairly and strictly honestly."

"Eh! that's strong indeed," cried Walter.

"Not too strong," said his brother. "There are but three ways of getting anything from another person's possession honestly: you must either earn it, as a man gets money from his master by working for it; or you must give a fair equivalent for it, either so much money as it is marketably worth, or something in exchange which will be worth as much to the person from whom you are getting the thing as the thing he is parting with is worth to him; or you must have it as a free gift from its owner. Now a raffle fulfils none of these conditions. Take the case of this mare Rosebud. Suppose you pay your guinea, and prove the successful person. You have not earned Rosebud, for you have not given a hundred guineas' worth of labour for her. You have not given a fair equivalent, such as an equally good horse or something else of the same value, nor an equivalent in money, for you have given only a guinea for what is worth a hundred guineas. Nor have you received her as a free gift."

"I quite agree with you, Amos," said his father; "you have put it very clearly. I think these raffles, in which you risk your little in the hope of getting some one else's much, are thoroughly unwholesome and dangerous in principle, and are calculated to encourage a taste for more serious gambling."

"But stop there, please, dear father," said Walter. "When a man gives his guinea for what is worth one hundred guineas, or when a man bets say one to ten, if he wins, does not the loser make a free gift to him? There is no compulsion. He stakes his bigger sum willingly, and loses it willingly."

"Nay, not so," said Amos. "He is not willing to lose his larger sum; he makes no out-and-out gift of it. In laying his larger sum against your smaller, he does so because he is persuaded or fully expects that he shall get your money and not lose his own."

"I quite agree with you," said Mr Huntingdon again.

Walter looked discomfited, and not best pleased. Then Miss Huntingdon said, in her clear gentle voice, "Surely dear Amos is



right. If the principle of gambling is in the raffle, though in a seemingly more innocent form, how can it be otherwise than perilous and wrong to engage in such things? Oh, there is such a terrible fascination in this venturing one's little in the hope of making it much, not by honest work of hand or brain, nor by giving an equivalent, nor by receiving it as the free-will loving gift of one who gladly does us a kindness. What this fascination may lead to is to be seen in that terrible paradise of the gambler, Monaco, on the shore of the lovely Mediterranean. I have lately heard a most thrilling account of what is to be seen in that fearfully attractive palace of despair. Lovely gardens are there, ravishing music, an exquisite salon where the entranced players meet to throw away fortune, peace, and hope. At first you might imagine you were in a church, so still and serious are the deluded mammon-worshippers. And what follows? I will mention but one case; it is a well-attested one. Two young Russian ladies, wealthy heiresses, entered the gaming-hall. For a while they looked on with indifference; then with some little interest; then the spell began to work. The fascination drew them on; they sat down, they played. At first they won; then they lost. Then they staked larger and larger sums in the vain hope of recovering the gold which was rapidly slipping away from their possession. But they played on. Loss followed loss; they still went on playing. Then they staked the last money they had, and lost. Bankrupt and heart-broken, they betook themselves to the cliffs that overhang the Mediterranean, and, hand in hand, plunged into the sea and were lost. Oh, can that be innocent which in any degree tends to encourage this thirst for getting gain not in the paths of honest industry, but in a way which God cannot and does not bless?"

She paused. Walter hung down his head, while his features worked uneasily. Then he slowly raised his face, and said, "I suppose I'm wrong; but then, what is to be done? Gregson will ask me about it, and what am I to say? 'Brother Amos disapproves of raffles;' will that do? I can just fancy I can see him and Saunders holding their sides and shaking like a pair of pepper-boxes. No, it won't do; we can't *always* be doing just what's right. If Amos don't go in for the raffle, I think I must, unless I wish to be laughed at till they've jeered all the spirit out of me."

Amos made no answer, nor did Miss Huntingdon; but as Walter looked towards her, with no very happy expression of countenance, she quietly laid one hand across the other. He saw it and coloured, and then, with a disdainful toss of the head, hurried away. But the arrow had hit its mark. As Miss

Huntingdon was about to prepare for bed, she heard a low voice outside her door saying, "May a naughty boy come in?" and Walter was admitted. The tears were in his eyes as he kissed his aunt and sat down. "I am waiting for the rod," he said, half mournfully and half playfully. "I deserve it, I know. I was wrong. I was unkind to Amos. I behaved like a cowardly sneak. Now, dear auntie, for a moral hero that isn't like me."

"Dear boy," said his aunt, placing her hands lovingly on his head, "you were wrong, I know; but you are right now, and I think you mean to keep so. I have a beautiful instance here of moral courage, just to the point; I was reading about it a few minutes ago.

"A young man once called on a most earnest and experienced minister of the gospel, Dr Spencer of Brooklyn, New York, about his difficulties in his earthly calling. He was salesman in a dry-goods store, and was required by his employer to do things which he felt not to be right. For instance, he must learn to judge by the appearance of any woman who entered the store, by her dress, her manner, her look, the tone of her voice, whether she had much knowledge of the article she wished to purchase; and if she had not, he must put the price higher, as high as he thought she could be induced to pay. With one class of customers he must *always* begin by asking a half or a third more than the regular price; and if any objection was made, he was to say, 'We have never sold it any cheaper,' or, 'You cannot buy that quality of goods any lower in the city.' In fact, a very large portion of the service expected of him was just to lie for the purpose of cheating. When he expressed his doubts about this being right, his employer laughed at him. 'Everybody does it,' he said; 'You can't be a merchant without it. All is fair in trade. You are too green.'—'I know I am too green,' the young man said to the minister sorrowfully; 'for I was brought up in the country, and don't know much of the world. My mother is a poor widow, but I don't believe *she* would think it right for me to do such things.'—'And do *you* think it right?' asked the minister.—'No; but my employer is a church member, and yet I believe it would make my old mother very bad if she knew I was doing such things every day.'—'Well, then,' said the good pastor, 'take your mother's way, and refuse his.'—'I shall lose my place then.'—'Well, lose your place; don't hesitate a moment; tell your employer you will do all that you honestly can, but that you were not engaged to deceive, to cheat, to lie.'—'If I should say that, he would tell me to be off.'—'Very well; *be off*, then.'—'I have no other place to go to, and he knows it.'—'No matter; go anywhere, do anything—dig

potatoes, black boots, sweep the streets for a living, sooner than yield for one hour to such temptation.'—'But if I leave that place so soon, it will make my old mother feel very bad; she will think that I am getting unsteady; she will be afraid that I am going to ruin.'—'Not a bit of it; tell her just the truth, and you will fill her old heart with joy. She will thank God that she has got such a son, and she will send up into heaven another prayer for you, which I would rather have than all the gold of Ophir. Now, go back to your store, and do all your duties most faithfully and punctually without lying. If your employer is not a fool, he will like you the better for it, and prize you the more, for he will at once see that he has got one clerk on whose truthfulness he can depend. But if the man is as silly as he is unconscientious, he will probably dismiss you before long. After that, you may be sure that God will open a way for you somewhere.'—The young man took Dr Spencer's advice, and lost his place, but soon found another, and afterwards became an eminent and prosperous merchant, while his old employer became bankrupt in about seven years after he left him, and had to toil on in disgraceful poverty. Dr Spencer adds, 'I attribute this young man's integrity, conversion, and salvation to his old mother, as he always fondly called her.'

"Now, dear Walter, you were saying, I think, when we were discussing the raffle, that we cannot always be doing just what is right, and that Gregson and Saunders would make great fun of you if you were to refuse to put down your name because Amos thinks it wrong to raffle. Does not that young American's case show very plainly that we *ought* to aim at always doing right? And is it not better to please a dear Christian old mother, or a dear Christian brother like Amos, than to be smiled upon by a dishonest master, or by such companions as Saunders or Gregson? You see, the young man acted with true moral courage when he braved the sneers and displeasure of his unscrupulous employer; and he found his reward in the approval of God, his conscience, and his dear old mother."

Walter made no reply, but kept his eyes fixed on the ground. Then he rose, flung his arms round his aunt's neck, kissed her half a dozen times very warmly, and, whispering in her ear, "Pray for me, dear auntie," hastily left the room. Oh, how Miss Huntingdon rejoiced at these few simple and touching words, both on Walter's own account and also on Amos's. She was sure now that her beloved nephew was feeling his way into the narrow path, and would be all right on the road before long.

A few days later, while Miss Huntingdon, Julia, and Amos were writing their letters a little before luncheon time, Walter opened the door and looked in with a comical expression on his face. "Are you all very busy?" he asked. Having received a reply in the negative, he advanced to the fire, crouched down by his aunt, hid his face in her lap, and then, looking up at her with a smile, said, "I've come to make an announcement and a confession. First and foremost, the raffle has come to grief, partly, I suppose, because Walter Huntingdon, junior, Esquire of Flixworth Manor, in the county of Hertfordshire, has refused to put down his name or have anything to do with it. There—what does the present company think of this important announcement?"

Amos and his aunt replied by loving smiles; Julia kept her eyes fixed on some work she had taken up.

"My next announcement," continued Walter, "is of equal interest and importance. The great firm of Huntingdon, Gregson, and Saunders has dissolved partnership. What do you say to that?"

Amos left his place at the table, and kneeling down close to his brother drew him warmly to him, his tears falling fast all the while as he whispered, "Dear, dear Walter, how happy you have made me!"

"Do you want to hear all about it?" asked the other. "Would you like to hear my confession?"

"By all means, dear boy," said his aunt, placing a fond hand on the head of each of the brothers. Julia left her place and crouched down close to Walter, so that her aunt's hands could include herself in their gentle pressure.

"Now for it," said Walter, rising and standing erect, with his back to the fire. "Yesterday," he continued, "as I was riding out before dinner, I met Saunders and Gregson on horseback. Gregson was riding Rosebud.—'Well,' said Gregson, 'is Rosebud to be yours?'—'Can't afford it,' I said; 'a hundred guineas is too much. I haven't got the money to spare.'—'No, of course not,' he said; 'but you can spare a guinea.'—'Yes,' I replied; 'but that won't buy Rosebud.'—'No,' he said; 'but it will give you a chance of getting her for a guinea.'—'That's one way,' I said; 'but it don't seem the right one to me. What do you say to swopping Rosebud for my pony? then you'll have an equivalent, at least if you think so.'—Saunders and he looked at one another as if they had seen a ghost; and then I said, 'Perhaps I can work out the value. Let me see. Will you give me fifty guineas a year if I

take the place of groom to you? I may earn Rosebud that way in two years if you give her to me instead of wages.'—My two companions began to whisper to one another, and to stare at me as if I'd just come out of an Egyptian mummy-case.—'What's up now?' I said.—'We can't make you out,' said Saunders; 'whatever are you driving at?'—'Oh, I'll soon make that clear!' I said. 'The fact is, gentlemen, I've been led to the conclusion that raffling isn't right; that it's only a sort of gambling; that, in fact, there are only three honest ways of my getting Rosebud. One is by giving an equivalent in money or something else; but I can't afford the hundred guineas, and you won't take my pony in exchange. The second way is by earning her—that is, by my doing so much work as will be of the same value; but it wouldn't suit you nor me for me to take the place of your groom for a couple of years. And the third way is for me to have her as a free gift; but I'm not so sanguine as to suppose that you mean to give her to me right out.'—'And where have you got all this precious nonsense from?' cried Saunders.—'In the first place,' I answered, 'you're right about the "precious," but wrong about the "nonsense;" it's precious truth. In the next place, I have learned these views on the subject of raffles from my brother Amos.'—Then there was a hullabaloo. 'Your brother Amos!' they shouted out, as if my dear brother was the very last person in the world that anything good or sensible could be expected from.—'Yes,' I said, as cool as an icicle, 'my brother Amos. I suppose if a thing's right, it's as good when it comes from him as from any one else.'—They were both taken aback, I can tell you. But I stuck to my point. They tried to chaff me out of it by saying, 'Well, I would be a man if I were you, and have an opinion of my own.'—'I have an opinion of my own,' said I, 'and it's none the less my own because it's the same as my brother's.'—'He daren't move a step by himself now for that brother of his,' sneered Saunders.—To this I replied, 'I'll just give you an answer in the words of one whose opinion you'll respect, I think, and it's this—'

"I dare do all that may become a man,  
Who dares do more is none."

"So says Shakespeare, and so say I.—Then they took to abusing Amos again; so I just told them that I had found by experience that my brother's advice and opinion were worth taking, and that I had no wish to hear him cried down unless they could show that he was wrong. Well, you may suppose that we soon found out that our horses wanted to go different

ways; so we raised our hats to one another and took leave, and thus ended the partnership of Huntingdon, Gregson, and Saunders."

There was silence for a while, during which the hands of the two brothers were clasped tightly in each other. At last Miss Huntingdon said, "Now, dear Walter, you may make your laurel crown whenever you please, and I shall be only too happy to place it myself on your head—yes, the crown fairly won by an act of true and lofty moral courage."

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## **Chapter Eighteen.**

### **A few Backward Steps.**

A year slipped rapidly by after the return of Julia Vivian to her home. Her unhappy husband had not shown himself anywhere in the neighbourhood, nor had he sent her a single letter. She herself gradually recovered her once lively spirits, and scattered much brightness round her. Miss Huntingdon would have retired, and left her to take the management of her father's household, but she implored her not to do so; and as Mr Huntingdon himself evidently preferred that his sister should keep her usual position in the family, at any rate for the present, she consented, hoping that the united influence of Amos and herself might be the means, under God, of bringing Julia and Walter to take a decided stand on the Lord's side.

So far, Walter was manifestly anxious to do what was right and to support his elder brother in his endeavours to bring a holy peace into the household. But his good intentions were often thwarted by his natural self-esteem. As for Julia, she was by no means prepared to see things in the same light that Amos did. Naturally high-spirited and self-willed, her troubles had rather bent her down for a while than in any degree permanently improved her character,—for there never was a truer remark than that of an old writer when he says, "Circumstances do not *make* us what we are, they rather *show* what we are." And now that one of her heaviest burdens was gone, she was very reluctant to curb her temper or give up her own will when to Amos it was her plain duty to do so. Self was none the less her idol because much of the gilding with which it had been adorned in happier days had been rudely rasped from it. She wished to please Amos, but she wished to please herself more. And whenever Amos's views and those of Walter did not quite

coincide, she always took side with the younger brother. Amos saw this, of course, but he was willing to bide his time. One part of his great object had been accomplished,—his sister had been restored to her old home and to her father's heart.

Mr Huntingdon, of course, never alluded to the past, and took great delight in his grandchildren, who were left pretty much to the care and training of an excellent servant whom Amos had chosen for them by his father's desire, and also to the loving and wise instructions of Miss Huntingdon; for their mother professed that she had not yet recovered health and energy sufficient to enable her to look after them herself. Amos saw this with regret, and wished that his sister could take a right view of her duty in the matter. At the same time he felt sure that the day had not yet come for making any attempt to bring his mother home again. He must defer this his cherished hope and purpose till his sister should have come to a different and better mind. For as she recovered herself, which she soon did, from the effects of her late life of trial and privation, Julia Vivian gave herself up almost entirely to reading amusing books, fishing, riding, and making one in any little party of pleasure which could be got up for her. She saw her children just for a few minutes night and morning, but evidently felt it rather a distasteful toil than a pleasure if anything obliged her now and then to give them a little extra attention. Indeed, she seemed to have got the idea firmly fixed in her mind that she was now to get all the enjoyment she could to make up for past years of trouble, and that the main business of her two brothers was to provide for her comfort and entertainment. And very charming she could make herself when her own tastes and whims were gratified, but anything like thwarting or opposition produced in her at once gloom and irritation. For her father's sake and the credit of the family she abstained from showing herself at large parties and entertainments where many of the guests would know a good deal about her past history; but whenever she could join in a bit of excitement without bringing herself into notice, she was wild to avail herself of the opportunity, and would not let children or home be any hindrance if she could possibly help it.

Summer had arrived, when one morning the post brought Mr Huntingdon a huge bill printed in letters of various shapes, colours, and sizes, from which it appeared that "the wonderful acrobat, Signor Giovanni Telitetti, of world-wide celebrity, would exhibit some marvellous feats, to conclude with a dance on the high rope." The entertainment was to be given in a park situate

in the next county, about ten miles distant from Flixworth Manor.

"There," said the squire, tossing the bill from him, so that it floated on to the loaf and settled there, "I suppose we shall none of us think it worth while to ride or drive ten miles to see this wonderful performer."

"Oh, I should so like to go!" cried Julia, when she had glanced through the bill.

"You, my child!" exclaimed her father in astonishment.

"Oh yes, father. Why not?"

"I should have thought," said her aunt, "that you—"

But here her niece interrupted her. "O auntie, there can be no possible harm. No one will notice us; there will be thousands of people, and we shall be lost in the crowd. People are never so thoroughly alone as when they are in the middle of a great crowd."

"And who is to go with you?" asked Mr Huntingdon.

"Oh, of course I don't expect dear sober old Amos to go, he is quite above such things; but Walter might take me,—wouldn't you, dear Walter?—Now, may I go, dear father, if Walter takes me? It will be such fun cantering there and back this delightful summer weather." She looked at Walter beseechingly, and her father hem'd and ha'd, not quite knowing what to say. "It's settled," she cried, clapping her hands. "Now, Walter, you can't say no."

"When is it to come off?" asked the squire.

"Next Wednesday," she replied. "Please don't trouble about it," she added; "it will be all right. I will be as grave as a duenna; and when I come back Amos shall read me an essay on prudence, and I will listen to every word and be so good."

No further opposition was attempted, and Walter considered himself bound to escort his sister.

On the following Wednesday, after luncheon, Walter and Julia set off for the place of amusement in high spirits. Julia was looking specially bright and attractive; and Walter, though he did not feel fully satisfied in going, yet threw himself now into



the excitement with all his might, partly for his sister's sake, and partly to drown any murmurs of conscience which he was not prepared to listen to. So with a merry ringing laugh they set off, and arrived at the park on the best terms with themselves and with each other. Large numbers of people had already assembled, and the place was glowing with banners and glittering devices, and resounding with the vigorous music of a brass band. Signor Telitetti was to be the special attraction, but there were many other objects of interest and excitement forming part of the entertainment. Among these were a small theatre, and a tent in which were various enticing-looking articles to be raffled for. The noble park, with its groups of trees of different species, its sloping sward, and a lake in the centre well stocked with water-fowl of various kinds, gave ample room and amusement to the motley multitude which had gathered for the show.

Walter and his sister, having left their horses at a neighbouring stable, paid their money at the gate, strolled into the park, and made their way amongst the crowds bent like themselves on getting as large a draught of excitement as the occasion would afford. As they came near the tent, they encountered Gregson and Saunders arm in arm. The young men took off their hats with an exaggerated show of politeness, and Saunders said half out loud as they passed on, "Not going in just at present for the raffle, I suppose." Walter coloured, but did not reply; but he began to feel a hearty dislike to the whole thing, and would have gladly beat a hasty retreat had he been alone. But now a more than ordinarily vehement flourish of music warned the spectators that Signor Telitetti was about to commence his athletic wonders. All crowded up to the place of exhibition, which was a broad open space in the very midst of the park, where a wooden structure had been erected, representing some grand palace or temple in Eastern style, and being gorgeously and profusely painted and gilded. In front of this were various smaller wooden erections, set up for the purpose of exhibiting the powers of the acrobat; while from the highest part of the sham palace a stout rope was led along at a considerable height from the ground to a neighbouring tree, from that tree to a second, and then down to the ground by a rapid incline.

All eyes were on the signor as he took his stand in front of the wooden building. Walter and his sister had pressed nearly to the edge of the crowd, and gazed with the deepest interest on the performer, who was habited in the tight-fitting garment usually worn by persons of his calling, his head, however, being enveloped in a strangely made, many-coloured cap, which very

much concealed his features; indeed it looked as if he were wearing a sort of mask, and that his eyes alone were unhidden. Had Walter or his sister seen him anywhere before? Walter was not sure, and yet he had an impression that there was something about the man familiar to him, but perhaps it was only the general similarity to others dressed for exhibitions of the like kind. He was surprised, however, and startled to find his sister, as she leaned her full weight on his arm, trembling violently. It might have been merely excitement; but the announcement that the signor's feats were about to commence prevented his asking his sister the cause of her agitation. And now all sorts of strange contortions, unnatural postures, and perverse displays of muscular eccentricity were gone through by the exhibitor, much to the satisfaction of the applauding crowd. As to Walter, somehow or other the whole thing seemed full of emptiness. Why was it so? Surely because, to use the forcible language of Chalmers, "the expulsive power of a superior affection" had begun to make such exhibitions distasteful to him. However, he had not much time for reflection. The acrobat was now coming to his performances on the rope. Hitherto his exertions and feats had been attended simply with difficulty; now they were to be attended with danger, and were therefore looked upon by the multitude with thrilling and breathless interest. Springing upon the rope, pole in hand, he made his way rapidly up the sloping cord, then from one tree to another, and then high in mid-air to the summit of the wooden palace or temple. Vehement bursts of applause rewarded him for this feat accomplished. And now he came down from his height on his return journey, which he accomplished with perfect ease. Again he was in the act of ascending, when, looking round for a moment on the crowd below him, his eye fell on Walter and his sister. Then a change appeared to come over him,—he seemed to have lost his steadiness and self-possession. Nevertheless he continued his upward course. But when he had gained the part of the rope which sloped upwards to the temple, and was about to exhibit some daring feat of agility, twice did he make the effort unsuccessfully, and then, in a third violent attempt, missed his foothold, and fell to the ground amongst the terror-stricken spectators.

Frightful then were the excitement and the cries of the horrified multitude. Some rushed to raise the poor fallen man, while the police struggled to keep back the surging crowd. Drawn on by a strange and terrible fascination, Walter and his sister pressed forward to where the unhappy acrobat lay bleeding and insensible. His features were now more plainly visible,—there

could be no mistake about him. Signor Telitetti was none other than Orlando Vivian.

"We must take him to the hospital, poor fellow, as quickly as possible," said one of the policemen. A stretcher was accordingly brought, and the poor shattered player was carried speedily forth from the scene of his transitory triumphs.

"And what shall we do?" asked Walter in a disturbed whisper to his sister.

"Oh, take me home! take me home!" she cried; "I can't bear it."

"But ought we not to go and look after him?" asked her brother.

"Take me home! take me home!" was all her cry, and the horses were soon brought and mounted; while the vast crowd melted gradually away, subdued, and exchanging half-whispered words of surprise and dismay.

Sadly and slowly did the brother and sister make their way home to Flixworth Manor, neither venturing a word for some miles. At last Julia, drawing as close to her brother as possible, said in a voice of agitated entreaty, "Walter, dear Walter, you *must* promise me one thing."

"What is that?" he asked gloomily.

She noticed his manner, and cried, "O Walter, you must; indeed you must."

"Must what?" he asked.

"Oh, you must promise me not to breathe to any one at home—not to my father, not to my aunt, not to any one at all, and least of all to Amos—who it was that—that met with this sad accident to-day. Will you promise me?" Walter was silent for a minute or more. "Oh!" she exclaimed passionately, "you will, you must; I shall be miserable if you do not."

"But," said her brother, "will this be right? ought you not to go to your poor wretched husband? Perhaps he is dying. I am sure Amos would say that you ought."

"Never mind what Amos would say," she exclaimed angrily; "I have not given up my conscience into his keeping. It's of no use; I have suffered enough for *him* (you know who I mean) and from him already. He can't be better cared for than he will

be at the hospital. If I were to go to him he would only swear at me."

"But it will be sure to come out and be generally known who he is, sooner or later," her brother replied; "and what good can be done by concealing it now?"

"Only the good of doing your poor sister a kindness," she said bitterly and pettishly. "But I don't see why it need come out; and it will be time for it to be known at home when it does come out."

"Well," said Walter reluctantly, "I promise—"

"There's a dear, good brother," she said; "you have taken a load off my mind. And as for him, we can get to hear from the hospital people how he is going on, and I can but go to him if they give a very bad report."

Her brother made no further reply, and the rest of the journey was completed almost in silence.

Every one at the Manor was of course deeply interested in the story which Walter had to tell, and shocked at the dreadful termination of the exhibition in the park. That Julia looked scared and ill was naturally no matter of wonder to anybody; to have witnessed such an accident was enough to upset the strongest nerves. In a day or two, however, she had pretty nearly recovered her former spirits, for the newspaper account of the terrible catastrophe finished by stating that Signor Telitetti was going on well; an arm and two or three ribs had been broken, and the body generally much bruised and shaken, but the hospital surgeons did not anticipate fatal results,—it was expected that in a few weeks the signor would be able to go about again. But though this news had come as a relief to Julia Vivian, and raised her spirits, there was by no means unclouded sunshine in her face or words. Conscience *would* speak, and it spoke in low but distinct utterances of condemnation. She could see, too, that Walter was not altogether feeling towards her as he had done before the accident. She had sunk in his esteem; he clearly did not take the same pleasure in consulting her wishes and getting up schemes for her amusement as formerly. To her aunt and Amos she rarely spoke, except when compelled to do so; and her father would often look at her anxiously, fearing that her health was giving way.

Amos wondered a little, and asked his brother if he could account for the change in their sister; for though at times she

was hurried along by a perfect gale of boisterous spirits, at others she was swallowed up by the profoundest gloom. Walter's answer was evasive, and left an impression on his brother's mind that there was something amiss which had been kept back from him. He made several loving attempts to draw his sister out of herself, and to lead her to confide her sorrows or difficulties to him, but all in vain: and when he attempted gently to guide her thoughts to Him who alone could give her true peace, she would turn from him with a vexed expression of countenance and an air of almost disdain. Poor Amos! how grievously was he disappointed to find the sister for whom he had done and suffered so much getting, now that she was restored to her old home, more and more out of sympathy with him in what was highest and best, and giving herself up to reckless and unmitigated selfishness. But he did not, he would not despair. Much had been accomplished already, and, though things were looking black, and heavy clouds were gathering, he would still wait and work in faith and patience, remembering that when the night is darkest the dawn is nearest.

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## **Chapter Nineteen.**

### **In the Dark Valley.**

Six weeks after the sad accident in the park the squire sat in the library after breakfast reading the county paper. Suddenly he turned very red, and his chest heaved with emotion, as his eyes ran rapidly through the following paragraph:—

"Extraordinary Proceeding at the County Hospital.

"It will be remembered that some few weeks ago a terrible accident happened to one Signor Telitetti, an acrobat of professedly world-wide reputation. The unfortunate man, while performing on the high rope in the presence of some thousands of spectators, suddenly lost his self-possession, or experienced some failure in power, and in consequence fell from a considerable height to the ground. He was taken to the hospital, where, under the skilful treatment of the medical officers, he made rapid progress towards returning health and strength, having suffered no more serious injuries than the breaking of an arm and two or three ribs. To the astonishment, however, and perplexity of the hospital officials, the signor has managed to leave the premises unobserved, and in his still feeble condition, and with his arm yet in a sling, to get clear away, so that no

one had any idea what had become of him. The reason, however, of this move on his part is becoming pretty plain, for it is now being more than whispered about that Signor Telitetti is no foreigner after all, but that this name is only one among many aliases borne by a disreputable stroller and swindler, who some time since victimised Lady Gambit by cheating her out of twenty pounds. There can be no doubt that the unfortunate man, dreading lest the police should pounce upon him when he left the hospital fully cured, contrived to elude their vigilance by taking himself off at a time when no one would suspect him of wishing or being able to change his quarters."

Mr Huntingdon read this over and over again, and his brow contracted as many painful thoughts crowded in upon him. Then, rising, he repaired to the morning room, where the other members of the family were assembled, reading or answering their letters. Taking the paper to Amos, he placed his finger on the painful paragraph, and signed to him to read it. Amos did so with a beating heart and troubled brow. "Anything amiss, father?" asked Walter, noticing the grave look on the faces of Mr Huntingdon and his brother. The squire made no reply, but, holding out his hand for the paper, passed it to his younger son. Julia, looking up, noticed the flushed face of her brother, and, before her father could prevent her, sprang up and, leaning over Walter's shoulder, read the article. Then, with a wild cry, she rushed out of the room.

"Oh! what is the trouble?" exclaimed Miss Huntingdon in a tone of great distress. Once more the paper was passed on, and she read the humiliating paragraph.

All were silent for a while. Then Miss Huntingdon said, "I must go to poor Julia."

"Do so," said the squire; "but come back as soon as you can."

His sister soon returned, saying that her niece had been much upset by what she had read, but would be better shortly.

"And now," said Mr Huntingdon, "I want to know if Julia was aware who the signor was at the time when the accident happened."

"She was," said Walter sorrowfully.

"And could she leave her wretched husband, wounded and perhaps dying, without an attempt to see that he was properly cared for?"

"Father," replied Walter, "it was so, and I deeply grieve over it. I tried to persuade her at the time—for we both knew him too well as he lay on the ground at our feet senseless and bleeding—I tried to persuade her that it was her duty to go with him; but she would not hear of it; she insisted on returning home at once, and said that he would be well looked after at the hospital, and that if she were to go to him he would only swear at her. So at last I gave it up; and she would not be pacified till I promised not to mention to any one that I knew the wretched man to be her husband. I suppose I was wrong in giving this promise,—I have never felt comfortable about it; but she was so miserable till I made it that I gave her my word; and that is just how it was."

"I quite understand you," said his father. "Poor Julia! we must make allowances for her; but she has plainly fallen short of her duty in the matter. I trust, however, that she has now had a wholesome lesson, poor thing, and that for her children's sake, and all our sakes, she will be content with her own home, and more ready to fulfil her duties as a mother."

Amos did not speak, but he was deeply moved. He felt that his sister's proper place would have been at the bedside of the man who, whatever his sins against her, was still her husband, and was when the accident had happened, for anything she knew to the contrary, crushed and dying, and about to be speedily separated from her for ever in this world. But she had not so seen her duty; she had shrunk from the pain, the sacrifice. She could not bear the thought of the interruption to her recovered home comforts and pleasures which the work of a nurse to the stricken man would involve. And could Amos make her see and acknowledge that she had erred? He feared not.

Dinner-time came. Julia was in her place as usual. There was a gloom over all the party, but no one alluded to the sad cause. And so, things reverted to their ordinary channel in a few days. Julia had become again full of life and spirits, though to close observers there was something forced and unnatural about her mirth and vivacity. And one thing Amos noticed with special pain—it was that she carefully avoided ever being alone with him; if they were accidentally left together by themselves, she would in a moment or two make some excuse for leaving the room.

Thus did things continue, till summer had given place to the rich beauties of autumn. It was on a mellow October morning that the post brought a letter for Amos in a handwriting which was

not familiar to him, and from a locality with which he was not acquainted. It was as follows:—

"Dear Sir,—In the course of my duties as Scripture reader in the town of Collingford, I have come upon a case which has greatly interested me. The reason for my troubling you about it will appear further on in my letter. I was calling about a fortnight ago on a poor widow woman who lives in one of the lowest parts of this town, in a miserable house, or rather part of it. She asked me to step into a small back room and see a lodger whom she had taken in some days before, and who was in a very bad state of health, and indeed not likely to recover. I did as she desired, and found a wretched-looking man seated in an old armchair, bowed together, and racked with a severe cough. One of his arms was in a sling, and he seemed to be suffering considerable pain in his left side. There was something in his appearance different from that of ordinary tramps; and when I heard him speak, I saw at once that he must have had a good education. I could make very little out of him at first, for he was very shy and reserved, and seemed terribly annoyed when I read a chapter and had a prayer with him the first visit, and he said some very sharp things against religion and the Bible. However, I persevered, and he got a little softened, especially when I brought him a little help and a few comforts from some Christian friends who had got interested in him. He has always avoided speaking about himself and his past history, and I suspect that he is hiding from the police. However, I have nothing to do with that, and am truly sorry for him. This morning I called and found him much worse. I asked him if he would like me to get him into the hospital, but he would not hear of it. Then I asked him if I could do anything more for him. He did not speak for some time, and then he said, 'Yes. Write a few lines for me to Mr Amos Huntingdon'—he gave me your address—'and just tell him how I am. He will know me by the name of Orlando Vivian.' 'Shall I say anything more?' I asked. 'No,' he said; 'please, just say that, and leave it.' So, dear sir, I have followed the poor gentleman's wishes. I call him a gentleman, for I think he must have been a gentleman once. Poor man! I fear he is dying, and cannot be here very long. At the same time, I feel it to be my duty to tell you that there is a bad fever raging in the town, and the place where he lives is anything but clean and healthy. And now I have only to ask your pardon for troubling you with this long letter, and to say that I shall be very happy to do anything for your friend, if such he is, that lies in my power, or to meet you at the Collingford station, should you think it right to come down and see him.—I am, dear sir, respectfully yours, James Harris."



It hardly need be said that this letter moved Amos deeply. What could be done? What was his duty? What was his sister's duty? He felt in perplexity, so he took the trouble and laid it out before Him who bids us cast on him every care. Then he betook himself to his aunt's room and read the letter to her. "What shall I do, dear aunt?" he asked.

"The question, I think, rather is," replied Miss Huntingdon, "What ought not your sister to do? Clearly, to my mind, it is her duty to go to her poor dying husband, forgive all if he shows himself really penitent, and be with him to the last."

"Such is my conviction too," said Amos sadly; "but I fear that Julia will not see her duty in the light in which we see it. May I call her, and just read the letter to her before you?"

"Yes, dear boy, if you like." So Amos repaired to the dining-room, where his sister and Walter were engaged in a brisk conversation.

"What's amiss with you now?" asked Walter, noticing the serious look on his brother's face. "You ought to be very bright this beautiful morning. Julia and I have been planning a nice little scheme for this afternoon. I am hoping, with the gamekeeper's help, to bag two or three brace of partridges before dinner-time. I can drive Julia to the gamekeeper's hut, and she can take a sketch or two while I am shooting. The woods are looking beautiful now with their autumnal tints, and will give lovely little bits for a sketch. Won't you join us?"

"Well," replied Amos gravely, "it would be very nice; but just now I have a rather important matter I want to talk to Julia about, if she will just spare me a few minutes, and come with me to my aunt's room."

"Dear me! what can you want with *me*?" asked his sister, turning deep red and then very pale. "I'm sure I don't want to talk about anything dismal this delicious morning. Oh! don't look so serious, Amos; you are always in the dolefuls now. Why can't you be cheerful and jolly, like Walter?"

"I am sorry to trouble you," replied her brother, "but there is a cause just now. I shall not keep you long, and then you can return to your jollity if you will." These last words he uttered in a tone of reproach which touched her spite of herself.

She rose and followed him in silence to her aunt's room. When all were seated, Amos produced the Scripture reader's letter,

and, expressing his deep sorrow to have to wound his sister, read it slowly out in a subdued voice. Julia sprang from her seat, and having snatched the letter from her brother's hand, read it through several times, her bosom heaving and her eyes flashing, and a few tears bursting forth now and then. "It's a hoax," she cried at last; "one of *his* hoaxes. It can't be true."

"I fear it *is* true," said Amos calmly. "To me the letter bears all the marks of truth.—Don't you think so, Aunt Kate?"

"Yes, surely," replied Miss Huntingdon sadly; "I cannot doubt its genuineness."

Julia then tossed the letter to her brother and sat down. "And what is it, then," she asked bitterly, and with knitted brows, "that you want me to do?"

"I think, dear Julia," said her aunt, "the real question is, What is it your duty to do?"

"Oh yes," she cried passionately; "my duty! Duty's a very fine thing. It's always 'duty, duty.' But there are two parties to duty: has *he* done his duty? He has beaten me, starved me, cursed me—is that doing his duty? And now I am to go and nurse him in a vile fever-smitten hole, and lose my life, and so deprive my children of a mother, because it's my duty. I don't see it at all."

Both her hearers looked deeply distressed. Then Amos said, "Still he is your husband, and dying."

"Dying!" she exclaimed sneeringly; "not he—it's all pretence. If anything common could have killed him, such as kills other people, he would have been dead ages ago. But he isn't like other men; he has got a charmed life. He'll be all right again after a while."

"And you will not go to him?" asked Amos, calmly and sadly.

"No, certainly not," she cried indignantly. "I've suffered more than enough already for him and from him. Besides, if you talk of duty, it is surely my duty to think of the dear children, and not run the risk of bringing back the fever to them, supposing I should not be killed by it myself."

"Then," said her brother deliberately, "I shall go."

"You, Amos!" exclaimed both his aunt and sister.

"Yes," he said; "my own duty is now plain to me. The poor man has let me know his case; he is my sister's husband, however unworthy a husband; he is dying, and may be eternally lost body and soul, and by going I may be made the means of helping on the good Scripture reader's work. The poor dying man's heart is softened just now, and it may be that when he hears the words of God's truth, and experiences kindness from one who has been treated by him as I have been, he may be led to seek and find pardon before he is taken away."

"But," said his aunt anxiously, "you will be running a great risk of catching the fever, and may lose your own health, and even your life."

"I know it," he said; "I have counted the cost; and should I be taken away, I shall merely have done my duty, and"—his voice trembled as he proceeded—"I shall be the one best spared and least missed in the household." As he uttered these last words, his sister, who had been gradually crouching down shiveringly on to the floor, clasped her hands over her face and wept bitterly, but she uttered no word. Then Amos turned to his aunt and said, "Will you, dear aunt, kindly explain to my father how matters are, and why I am gone?—Poor Julia!" he added, raising her up gently and kissing her forehead, "all may yet be well. May I take him *one* kind word from you?" She did not speak, but her bosom heaved convulsively. At last she said in a hoarse, quivering whisper, "Yes, what you like; and—write and tell me if he is really dying." Then she rushed out of the room to her own chamber, but appeared at luncheon with all traces of emotion vanished from her features.

The squire was absent attending a business meeting in the neighbouring town, and nothing had yet been said to Walter on the subject of his brother's departure. That afternoon Amos set off for Collingford, and Walter and his sister on their shooting and sketching expedition, which proved a miserable failure, so far as any pleasure to Julia was concerned.

Collingford was nearly a day's journey from Flixworth Manor, so it was not till dark that Amos arrived at the town. He sought out at once the Scripture reader, and obtained full information as to the state of the poor sufferer. Could he obtain lodgings in the house where the sick man was? Mr Harris shook his head.

"I am not afraid either of poor accommodation or of infection," said Amos. "I am come to do a work, and am safe in the Lord's hands till it is done. He has sent me, and he will keep me."

The Scripture reader grasped him warmly by the hand. "You shall lodge in my house," he said, "if you can be satisfied with humble fare and my plain ways. I am not a married man, but I have a good old woman who looks after me, and she will look after you too, and you can come and go just as you please."

"I will take you at your word, my friend," said the other, "and will gladly pay for bed and board."

"All right, all right," cried Mr Harris: "and for my part I am not going to pry into your reasons for coming. You are one of the Lord's servants on an errand of mercy and self-denying love—I can see that; and you are welcome to my services and my silence."

Amos thanked him warmly, and his moderate luggage was soon deposited in the Scripture reader's dwelling.

The next morning, after an early breakfast, the two friends—for true friends they at once became in the bonds of the gospel, loving Christ's image in each other—set out for Orlando Vivian's lodging.

"You must be prepared for something very miserable," said the Scripture reader.

"I am prepared for anything," said the other calmly. But truly Amos was staggered when he entered the room where sat, in the midst of gloom and filth, the man who had been the cause of so much distress to him and his. The atmosphere was oppressive with the concentrated foulness of numberless evil odours. A bed there was in the darkest corner of the room on the floor. It looked as though composed of the refuse raked from a pig-sty, and thrust into a sack which had been used for the conveyance of dust and bones. Bolster or pillow it had none, but against the wall, where the bed's head was supposed to be, were three or four logs of rough wood piled together, over which was laid a faded cloak crumpled into a heap. Such was the only couch which the unhappy sufferer had to lay him down upon at night, or when weary of sitting in the high-backed, creaking armchair. Uncleanliness met the eye on every side—in the one greasy plate, on which lay a lump of repulsive-looking food; in the broken-mouthed jug, which reeked with the smell of stale beer; in the window, whose bemired and cobwebbed panes kept out more light than they admitted; in the ceiling, between whose smoke-grimed rafters large rents allowed many an abomination to drop down from the crowded room above; in the three-legged table, which, being loose in all its decaying

joints, reeled to and fro at every touch; in the spiders, beetles, and other self-invited specimens of the insect tribe, which had long found a congenial home in these dismal quarters. And there—worn, haggard, hungry, suffering, helpless—in the midst of all this desolation, sat the broken-down, shattered stroller, coughing every now and then as though the spasm would rend him in pieces.

The heart of Amos was touched at the terrible sight with a feeling of the profoundest pity, as he approached the chair occupied by the wreck of what might have been a man noble and good, loving and loved. Anything like resentment was entirely lost in his desire to alleviate if he could the misery he saw before him.

"I have brought a friend to see you," said Mr Harris, stepping forward. The sick man raised his head slowly, and, as his eyes fell on Amos, he trembled violently, and clutched his chair with a convulsive grasp. Then a fit of coughing came on, and all were silent. "I will leave you together, if you please," said the Scripture reader after a pause to Amos. "You know where to find me if I am wanted," and he retired.

Long was it before the unhappy man could trust himself to speak. At last, having sipped a little of a soothing mixture which Mr Harris had brought him, he turned his face towards his brother-in-law, who had now taken a seat in front of him on a three-legged stool, and said, "Shall I tell you why I sent to you, Mr Huntingdon?" Amos inclined his head. "It was," continued the sick man, "because I have insulted you, deceived you, entrapped you, and threatened your life. That would be in most cases the very reason why you should have been the very last person I should have sent to. But I believe you are *real*. I believe you are a true Christian, if there is such a thing. *I* am not real. I am a sham, a cheat, a lie; my whole life has been a lie; my unbelief has been a lie. But, if there is truth in the Bible and in Christianity, I believe you have found it. I am sure that you are real and genuine. I felt it when I was deceiving you, and I feel it more and more the more I think about it. So, as I am told that it is part of the character of those who really take the Bible for their guide to return good for evil, I have sent to you."

He had uttered these words in broken sentences, and now sank back exhausted. When he had recovered himself sufficiently to listen, Amos, deeply moved, said kindly and earnestly, "You did right, my poor friend, to send to me; and now I am here, I must see what I can do for you."

"But, can you really forgive me?" said the other, fixing his dark eyes on his visitor. "Remember how I have behaved to yourself; remember how I have behaved to your sister. Can you really forgive me."

Amos made no immediate reply, but, taking out of his pocket a small New Testament which he had purposely brought with him, read in a clear, earnest voice the parable of the unmerciful servant, and, when he had finished it, added, "How could I ever hope for forgiveness from God if I could not forgive the transgressions of a poor fellow-sinner against myself? Yes, my poor brother, I do freely forgive you; and oh, let me have the happiness of seeing you seek forgiveness of Him who has still a place in his heart and in his kingdom for you."

The poor sufferer struggled in vain to conceal his strong emotion. Tears, sobs would burst forth. A violent fit of coughing came on, and for a time Amos feared a fatal result. But at length the sick man regained composure and a lull from his cough, and then said, with slow and painful effort, "It is true. I believe your religion is true. I cannot doubt it. It is real, for you are real. It is real for you, but, alas! not real for me."

Amos was going to turn to another passage in his New Testament, but the other waved his hand impatiently. "No more of that now," he said; "I have other things just at present on my mind. You know that I am a doomed man. The police are looking out for me; but I shall cheat them yet. Death will have me first. Yes, I am a dying man.—Of course *she* has not come with you. Perhaps you have not told her that you were coming. Well, it's better she shouldn't come; there's fever about, and I have dragged her down low enough already. This is no place for her. But I shall not be here long to trouble any of you. Will you tell her that I am sorry for my past treatment of her? and keep an eye on the children, will you, as you have done? Oh, don't let them come to this!" Here the unhappy man fairly broke down.

When he had again partially recovered, Amos begged him to keep himself as quiet as he could, adding that all might yet be well, and that he must now leave him, but would return again in a few hours.

Having sought the good Scripture reader, and ascertained from him that the medical man gave no hopes of the unhappy man living more than a few days, Amos at once confided to his host the sad story of his sister's marriage and its consequences, and now asked his advice and help as to how he could make the remaining time of his brother-in-law's life as comfortable as

circumstances would permit. Mr Harris at once threw himself heartily into the matter, and before night the dying man had been tenderly conveyed from his miserable quarters to the Scripture reader's own dwelling, where everything was at once done that could alleviate his sufferings and supply his wants.

That same evening Amos wrote to his sister in these brief words: "Orlando is dying. A few days will end all." He purposely added no words of persuasion, nor any account of his interview with her husband and what he had done for his comfort; for he feared that any such account from himself might just steel her heart against any appeal, and make her rest satisfied with what another was doing for the man whom she had vowed to love in sickness as well as in health. He knew that his scrap of a letter must prove startling by its abruptness; but he had no wish that it should be otherwise. These startling words might rouse her to a sense of her duty; if they did not, he felt that nothing would.

Two days passed over. Orlando Vivian grew weaker and weaker, but was full of gratitude to Amos. He also listened with patience and respect when the Scripture was read to him or prayer offered by his side; but he made no remark at such times. It was on the morning of the third day after the patient's removal to his new abode that a hired carriage drew up at the Scripture reader's door, and, to Amos's great pleasure and thankfulness, brought his sister. Yes, and he could tell by her greeting of him and by her whole manner that a new light had dawned upon her heart and conscience, in which the idol of self had been seen by her in somewhat of its true deformity. "Oh, dear Amos!" she cried, as she wept on his shoulder, "pardon me; pity me. I have been wrong, oh, very wrong; but I hope, oh, I do hope that it is not yet quite too late!" Fondly pressing her to him, her brother told her that she had his full and forgiving love; and then he gave her an account of what he had done since his arrival in Collingford, and told her that her husband was now in the same house as herself, and was receiving every attention and comfort. On hearing this, Julia Vivian would have at once rushed into the sick chamber, but Amos checked her, warning her of the effect such a sudden appearance might have on one in his exhausted and suffering condition. He must himself break the news of her coming gradually.

Entering the neat little bedroom, to his surprise Amos found his brother-in-law painfully agitated. "You have got a visitor," he said, in a voice scarcely audible. "I heard a carriage drive up to the door, and since then I have heard a voice. Oh, can it be? Yes; I see it in your eyes."

"Calm yourself, my poor brother," said Amos; "it is even as you suppose. Julia has come, and I am truly thankful for it."

The humbled man tried to conceal his tears with his one uninjured hand, and said at last, "I think I can bear it now; let her come in."

On her brother's invitation Julia entered. The eyes of the two met,—the eyes of the oppressor and the oppressed; but how changed in position now! The once down-trodden wife now radiant with health and beauty, a beauty heightened by its passing cloud of tender sadness. The once overbearing, heartless husband now a stranded wreck. How haggard he looked! and how those hollow sunken eyes swam with a tearful look that craved a pity which they seemed at the same time to despair of! And could she give that pity? Had he not forsaken her and her children, and left them to grinding poverty? Had he not raised his hand against her and cruelly smitten her? Had he not laughed her to scorn? Had he not used her as a mere plaything, and then flung her aside, as the child does the toy which it has covered for a time with its caresses? He had done all this, and more; and now she was there before him, but out of his clutches, and able, without fear of harm to herself, to charge him with his past neglect and cruelty. Yes; the outraged wife could have done this, but the woman's heart that throbbed in her bosom forbade it. She was the loving woman still, though the fountain of her love had been sealed for a time. Stealing gently up to his chair, lest any sudden movement should agitate him too much, and yet quivering all the while in every limb from suppressed excitement, she bowed herself over him, and gathered his head softly to her bosom, whispering, "Poor, dear Orlando, you are glad, are you not, to see me?" Then, as the huge rapid drops of the thunder-cloud, which has hung overhead for a time in the midst of oppressive stillness, patter at first on the leaves one by one, and then break into a sweeping deluge, so did a storm of weeping pour from the eyes and heart of that crushed and spirit-broken sinner. Hardly daring to place a hand with its pressure of answering love on the neck which that same hand had not long since disfigured with bruises and blood, he yet ventured at last to draw his wife closer to him, whispering, "It is too much." Sweetly soothing him, Julia helped him to dry his tears, and then sat down by his side, taking the hand of his uninjured arm in her own.

No one spoke again for a while. At last Mr Vivian roused himself to an effort, and, disengaging his hand, looked his wife steadily and sorrowfully in the face. "Tell me, Julia," he said, "tell me the



truth,—tell me, can you really and from your heart forgive me?—nay, do not speak till you have heard me out,”—for she was about to give an eager reply. “Consider well. You know what I have been to you,—the brute, the tyrant, the traitor. Can you, then, in view of all the past, forgive me from your heart?”

“I can, I do, dear Orlando, from my very heart,” she cried; “and surely I too have much to be forgiven.”

“Not by me,” he said earnestly. “And now,” he added, “as you have assured me of your forgiveness, and as my days in this world can be but few,—nay, I know it, I know it,—I have two dying requests to make of you, and only two. Will you grant me them?”

“Oh yes, yes, dear husband, if they are in my power.”

“They are perfectly within your power. The first is, that you would try and pay back part of my deep debt of gratitude to your noblest of brothers, who is standing there—to Amos Huntingdon, whom *I* dare not call brother; and I will tell you how the payment is to be made—not in gold or silver, for he would not take such payment, but in giving yourself up to the service of that Saviour whom he has truly and courageously followed. That, I know, would be the only payment he would care to accept, and that will rejoice his heart. Will you promise?”

“Oh, that I will!” she exclaimed, clasping her hands passionately together. “I have misunderstood, I have thwarted dear Amos shamefully, but now I can truly say, ‘His people shall be my people, and his God my God.’”

“Thank you for that. My second request concerns our children. Promise me that you will not take them from under your brother’s eye, and that you will strive to bring them up as he would have you; then I shall know that they will be spared such misery as this, that they will not need to be reminded, by way of warning, of the disgraceful example of their unworthy and guilty father.”

“I promise, I promise!” cried the weeping wife, burying her face in her husband’s bosom. When she raised her eyes to his again there was a sweet smile on her features as she said, “Dearest Orlando, all may yet be well, even should you be taken from us.”

“For you, yes; for me, I cannot say,” was his reply.

"Oh yes," she cried earnestly; "I am sure that dear Amos has put before you the way to the better land, open to us all through our loving Saviour; and I prayed last night—oh, so earnestly—that you might find that way."

"Thank you for that," he said mournfully; "it may be so; at any rate I have got thus far—I shall not cease to cry, so long as I have breath, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'" And these were the last words on the poor penitent's lips.

For three days after this interview he lingered in much pain, but without a murmur. Whenever Mr Harris or Amos read the Word of God and prayed he was deeply attentive, but made no remark. Julia was constantly with him, and poured out her rekindled love in a thousand little tender services. At last the end came: there was neither joy nor peace, but there was not despair,—just one little ray of hope lighted the dark valley.

When the unostentatious funeral was over, Amos and his sister returned home cast down yet hopeful and trustful. That evening a subdued but happy little group gathered in Miss Huntingdon's private sitting-room, consisting of Amos, Julia, Walter, and their aunt. When Amos had answered many questions concerning the last days of his brother-in-law, Walter turned to his aunt and said, "Now, dear auntie, you have some examples of moral courage ready for us I am sure.—Amos, you are to be a good boy, and not to turn your back upon the teacher, as I see you are inclined to do. I know why; but it does not matter. Julia and I want doing good to, if you don't; so let us all attend."

"Yes," said Miss Huntingdon, "I know what you mean, and so of course does your brother; he does not wish to listen to his own praises, but he must not refuse to listen to the praises of others, even though their conduct may more or less resemble his own. I have some noble examples of moral courage to bring before you, for I have been thinking much on the matter since Amos and Julia left us. My heroes and heroines—for I have some of each sex—will now consist of those who have braved death from disease or pestilence in the path of duty. And first of all, I must go back to our old example of moral heroism—I mean, to one who has already furnished us with a lesson—John Howard. That remarkable man was not satisfied with visiting the prisons, and bringing about reforms in them for the benefit and comfort of the poor prisoners. He wished to alleviate the sufferings of his fellow-creatures to a still greater extent; so he formed the plan of visiting the hospitals and lazarettos set apart for contagious diseases in various countries. Amongst other places he went to Smyrna and Constantinople when these cities

were suffering from the plague. From Smyrna he sailed in a vessel with a foul bill of health to Venice, where he became an inmate of a lazaretto. Here he was placed in a dirty room full of vermin, without table, chair, or bed. He employed a person to wash the room, but it was still dirty and offensive. Suffering here with headache and slow fever, he was removed to a lazaretto near the town, and had two rooms assigned him, both in as dirty a state as that he had left. His active mind devised a plan for making these rooms more comfortable for the next occupant, and though opposed by the indolence and prejudices of the people about him, he contrived secretly to procure a quarter of a bushel of lime and a brush, and, by rising very early, and bribing his attendant to help him, contrived to have the place completely purified. Now his object in thus exposing himself to infection and disease was not that he might gratify some crotchet, or get a name with the world, but that from personal experience of the unutterable miseries of such places as these lazarettos were, he might be better able to suggest the needful improvements and remedies. This he had set before himself as his work; to this he believed that duty called him; and that was enough for him. Suffering, sickness, death, they were as nothing to him when weighed in the balance against high and holy duty."

"A noble hero indeed, dear auntie," cried Walter; "and now for another of the same sort."

"Well, my dear boy, my second example embraces many excellent men, all devoted to the same self-denying and self-sacrificing work,—I am now alluding to the Moravian missionaries. These truly heroic men, not counting their lives dear, left home and friends, not to visit sunny lands, where the charms of the scenery might in a measure make up for the toils and privations they had to undergo, nor to find among Arctic frosts and snows at any rate pure and refreshing breezes, though many of them did go forth into these inclement regions to carry the gospel of peace with them, and in so doing to endure the most terrible hardships. But the Moravians I am now speaking of are those who volunteered to enter the pest-houses and infected places from which they could never come forth again. Here they lived, and here they died, giving up every earthly comfort and attraction that they might set gospel truth before those whose infected and repulsive bodies made them objects of terror and avoidance to all but those self-renouncing followers of their Saviour. Here, indeed, moral courage has reached its height."

"How wonderful!" said Julia thoughtfully, and with a sigh; "I could never have done it."

"No," said Miss Huntingdon; "nor does God commonly require such service from us. And yet, dear Julia, ladies as tenderly brought up as yourself have gone forth cheerfully to little short of certain death from pestilential airs, and have neither shrunk nor murmured when the call came. And this brings me to my last example of what I may call sublime moral courage or heroism. It is taken from the records of the Church Missionary Society. When first that society's noble work began, its agents went forth to settle among the poor negroes of Western Africa in the neighbourhood of Sierra Leone. But the fever that hovered on the coast was enough to terrify any one who loved his life more than Christ. In the first twenty years of that mission no fewer than fifty-three male and female missionaries died at their posts. In the year 1823, out of five who went out four died within six months, yet two years afterwards six presented themselves for that mission; and, indeed, since the formation of that mission there have never been men wanting—true heroes of the Lord Jesus Christ—who have willingly offered themselves for the blessed but deadly service. The women were as devoted as the men. A bright young couple, the Reverend Henry Palmer and his wife, landed at Sierra Leone on March 21, 1823. In the beginning of May, not two full months afterwards, the husband was dead; in June, just one month later, the wife was dead also. Yet neither spoke in their dying moments one word of regret, but gloried in the work and in the sacrifice they had been called to make. Another female missionary to the same parts, a widow, said: 'I have now lived one year in Africa, eight months of which I have been a widow; but I cannot resolve to leave Africa.' Another, whose course was finished in twenty-two short days, said to her husband on her death-bed: 'Never once think that I repent of coming here with you.' Her only fear seemed to be lest her death should discourage others, or damp her husband's zeal.—I have now finished my examples. I am sure, dear children, that they are to the point; I mean, that they are examples of the sublimest moral courage—that courage which leads godly men and women not to shrink from duty though disease and death lie before them or hover over their path."

"Thank you, dearest auntie," said Walter; "you have indeed brought some glorious examples before us, and they just fit in with the conduct of our own dear hero here, who seems to wish us to forget that there ever was such a person as Amos Huntingdon, but he certainly won't succeed."

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## **Chapter Twenty.**

### **Further Progress.**

How greatly did Amos rejoice that now one portion of the great purpose to which he had devoted himself had been so thoroughly accomplished; his dear sister had been restored to her earthly home, and the death of her unhappy husband had taken away all fear of her being withdrawn from it again. And, better still, she, the poor wayward and wandering sheep, who till late did not love the fold nor the Good Shepherd's voice, had been sought and found by him, and brought back from the wilderness with rejoicings. The heart of the good brother overflowed with gratitude and praise for this, for it was more than he had yet dared to hope. But there could be no doubt about it. The eyes of his sister had been opened to see how entirely she had hitherto been living to self, while her husband's dying words had led her to see her duty to her children, and to mourn over her ingratitude to Amos.

There was one little circumstance which specially touched that brother's heart. On the Sunday after her return from her parting visit to her husband, Julia appeared at church in deep mourning, her children wearing the same; and at dinner she had put on a neat widow's cap. Amos had rather expected that she would have treated her married life as a thing so entirely to be forgotten—a thing of misery and shame, a thing of the past to be henceforth to her and others as though it had never been, except so far as her children were concerned—that she would have continued to dress herself and her little ones as usual, so as not by any outward sign to remind those around her that she had suffered any loss, or recall their thoughts to the man who had brought nothing but degradation to herself and disgrace to her family. He was therefore deeply thankful to see that she had taken a different course; for it told of a subdued and chastened spirit, and of a willingness to bear patiently and meekly the burden which her own fault, in a measure at least, had laid upon her. Mr Huntingdon also appreciated her conduct in this matter, and, pressing her fondly to him as she was retiring to rest, kissed her tenderly, and whispered in her ear, as he looked lovingly into her tearful eyes, "Dear child, this is as it should be; you are right, I am sure, in adopting this dress; it would have been unworthy of you and unbecoming not to have done so." Old Harry, however, was not quite of the same mind; but he would not wound any of the members of the family

upstairs by giving expression to his feelings on the subject. But in the kitchen he spoke out his sentiments without any reserve. "Put herself and the children in mourning for such a scoundrel as him! Why, if it had been me, I'd have clothed myself and them in scarlet and gold, just to show how glad I was to be shut of such a scamp for good and all. But perhaps I'm wrong; they tell me the poor man repented at the last. Well, a good thing for him if he did, for I'm sure he'd a precious lot to repent of."

And now Amos bent his mind and energies towards the accomplishment of that part of his life's great purpose which lay yet nearer, if possible, to his heart than even his sister's restoration to her father's house and affection. His mother was still a stranger to her home;—how should he bring her back? He felt that he must deal in the matter with a gentle and cautious hand. His aunt and the old butler were the only members of the household who as yet knew of his desire and intention. Mr Huntingdon had come to acquiesce in his wife's absence as a sad necessity, and it did not now occur to him to connect his daughter's return with the possibility of its being directly or indirectly a link in the recovery of the mother from her mental disorder. Walter also never put the two things together. Indeed, the state of his mother was so distressing a subject, that he had come to act upon the conviction that the less he thought about it the better.

But what could Amos do? Turning matters over in his mind, it became an established purpose with him to bring about his mother's perfect restoration to sanity without letting his father have any suspicion of what he was attempting. With all his love for that father, he could not help having a strong conviction that, were he to consult him in the matter, the attempt at restoration would probably prove a failure. Either Mr Huntingdon would take things into his own hands, and, acting with characteristic impetuosity and bluntness, would most likely hinder where he meant to help forward, or else he would fail perhaps to understand and appreciate his son's views and methods of proceeding, and would prevent a successful issue by his impatience or interference. So Amos resolved that he would take the responsibility and mode of action on himself. Should he fail, his father would not have to suffer the pain of disappointment from that failure; should he succeed, he would have the happiness of bringing about a loving meeting again between those parents so dear to him, which would be to his father all the more delightful from its taking him by surprise. Secrecy, then, was an essential. No one must betray his purpose to his father. Therefore, when the family had all settled

down peacefully, with the young widow sweetly and lovingly filling her place as a daughter and mother, Amos, one evening in the early part of the summer which followed his brother-in-law's death, betook himself to the butler's pantry.

"Harry," he said, having seated himself on the closed lid of the plate chest, "I want just a word with you on a subject of great importance."

"As many words as you like, my dear young master," said the old man; "it's always a privilege whenever I gets a visit from you, or dear Miss Julia as was, bless her. What a pity she ever changed Miss into Mrs; but perhaps some good man 'll get her to change it into a better Mrs some day, and wipe the taste of that horrid cruel man's name out of all our mouths."

"I don't know, Harry; things are better as they are at present. My dear sister's trial has been blessed to her, I can see; she is being brought out by it decidedly on to the Lord's side."

"You're right, Master Amos, you're right; and I'm nothing but a stupid stumbling old donkey.—Now, please, sir, what's this here important subject you wants to talk to me about?"

"Just this, Harry. You know that I want to get back my dear mother again among us, and I believe it can be done; but it will want a deal of wisdom and what people call 'tact' to bring it about. Now, I'm not going to speak to my father on the subject, because I think his feelings would so stir and excite him if I did, he would be so eager and anxious—it's part of his nature, you know, and he cannot help it—that he might spoil all."

"Just so, Master Amos; he'd just be going slap-bang about it, I daresay, and he'd drive the poor lady clean out of as many of her seven senses as she'd got still left, poor thing."

"Something of that kind," said Amos, smiling. "Well, you see, Harry, if I am to undertake the matter I must do it my own way; and it will require a great deal of care, and not a word must come out about it."

"Ah, I see, Master Amos," said the old man, "you want me to be 'mum.' Now, you look here, sir—try now if you can get a word out of me." So saying, Harry closed his lips tight together, stuck his hands in his trousers' pockets, and walked about the pantry with his head in the air.

"I am quite satisfied," said Amos, laughing.

"You may well be so, Master Amos," said the other. "Me speak about such a thing to them maids in the kitchen, or the coachman, or stable-boy, or any one else in the universal world! Let the whole on 'em put together try it on, that's all."

"Thank you, Harry," said Amos; "no one as yet knows about it but my aunt and yourself. But I shall have to take my brother and sister into my confidence, as I shall want their help in carrying out my plan."

"All right, sir, all right; and, if any one mentions the poor lady before me, you may depend upon it I shall look like a deaf and dumb statty cut out of stone."

Amos then sought his aunt, and, having given her briefly his own views, asked his brother and sister to join him in Miss Huntingdon's room. He unfolded to them his purpose, and then proceeded as follows: "What I propose to do is this: I want to spare our dear father all pain and trouble in the matter, and, if I am permitted to carry out my plan with success, to give him a gentle and happy surprise at the end. But I must have the help of my dear brother and sister. The place where our dear mother now lives in retirement is a few miles inland from the sea-coast. At the sea-side nearest to her residence I intend taking a house for a time. When I have secured this, I shall invite you, dear Julia and Walter, to be my guests there for a season. I shall easily, I have no doubt, persuade my father to spare you, on the ground that the little change to the sea-air will do us all good, which will be perfectly true, and that this short holiday has been a pet scheme of my own, which will be equally true. My father will be much occupied about electioneering business the next two or three months, and as this will take him a good deal from home, he will not miss us so much as he might otherwise have done; and Aunt Kate, who knows of my plans and approves of them, will kindly spare us for a while, and will look after the children, who will follow us in a few days, and may be of use in carrying out my object."

"Capital," said Walter; "but you will want a mint of money to do all this."

"Never mind that," replied his brother; "I have considered it all, and you may safely leave the ways and means to me."

"And I am sure, dear Amos," said his sister, "we shall be only too thankful to be helpful in any way in bringing back our dear mother amongst us."



In about three weeks' time from this conversation, during which Amos had been making his arrangements, he told his father of his sea-side scheme, and received his hearty approval. "It is very good of you, my dear boy," he said, "to provide such a nice change for your sister and Walter. Perhaps your aunt and I may run over and see you, if this election business will allow me any spare time."

Mr Huntingdon was well aware that the sea-side retreat which Amos had selected was near the place where his poor wife was in her retirement, but this was not at all displeasing to him; for though he had never himself mentioned that place of retirement by name to any of his family except his sister, he thought it not improbable that his children would have become by this time acquainted with it, and the thought that they might go over and see their afflicted mother once or more was a comfort to him. Not that he entertained any real hope of his wife's return to such a state of mind as would allow of her coming home again. No such prospect had yet been held out to him, and, indeed, while his daughter was still shut out from his house, he had felt that, had there been sufficient improvement in his wife's state to admit of her return, the continued absence of her daughter, and the very mention of that daughter's name being forbidden in the family, would have been likely to throw her mind off its balance again. So he had learned to acquiesce in her permanent absence as a thing inevitable, and to drown, as far as possible, all thoughts about that absence in a multiplicity of business. But now that Amos and his brother and sister were going to spend some time in their poor mother's neighbourhood, there arose in Mr Huntingdon's mind a sort of vague idea that perhaps good to her might come of it. But the bustling election business so absorbed him at present that he never thought of bringing that idea into a definite shape.

It was now, as has been said, early summer. The little family party were sitting at breakfast the day before the intended trip to the sea, when Walter remarked to his brother, "What do you say, Amos, to our taking our ponies to the sea with us? It would do them good, and it would be capital fun to have some good gallops along the sands."

Amos turned red, and did not answer. Walter repeated his question. His brother then replied, but with evident reluctance, "The fact is, I have sold Prince."

"Sold Prince!" exclaimed his brother and sister.

"My dear Amos," said his father, "what can have induced you to sell Prince? Surely you are imposing too great a burden on yourself. I remember now that I have not seen you riding lately. I am very sorry that you should have thought of such a thing. Why didn't you come to me?"

"My dear father," said Amos earnestly, and with a bright smile, "you have quite enough to do with your time and money just now, so I have not troubled you about the matter. I have a little scheme of my own which is a bit of a secret, and it needs a little self-denial to carry it out. I want the money more than I want Prince just now. I have found a capital master for him, who will treat him kindly; and by-and-by I shall be able to get him back again, perhaps. At any rate, will you be content to trust me in the matter, dear father?"

"Trust you, my dear boy!" exclaimed the squire; "indeed I ought, and will, for you thoroughly deserve my trust; only it grieves me to think that you should have parted with your favourite pony."

"Oh, never mind that, father," replied Amos cheerily, "it will be all right. Thank you so much for your kind confidence; what I have done will do me no harm."

The conversation then passed on to other subjects, but Walter was clearly a little uneasy in his mind. "Amos," he cried, when his father had left the breakfast-table for a few minutes to speak to a tenant who wanted an early word with him, "are you going into business soon?"

"Business, Walter! Not that I know of. What sort of business do you mean?"

"Oh, into the butter, cheese, and bacon line."

"I don't understand you."

"Don't you? Well, it seems to me that sundry pounds of butter which have not spread themselves lately on your bread or toast, as they ought to have done, are intended to turn up somewhere one of these days."

The effect of this little speech on Amos was manifestly very disconcerting; he turned red, looked confused, then with knitted brows gazed at the window. Walter, sorry to have given him pain, was just about to make some further remark, when his eyes fell on the hands of Miss Huntingdon, which were crossed

on the table. Nodding his head profoundly towards his aunt, he dashed off at once into another subject, and his brother soon recovered his equanimity.

That afternoon, Walter, with his sister leaning on his arm, came and seated himself by his aunt, who had taken her needlework to the summer-house. Amos did not join them, being busily engaged in preparations for the morrow's journey. "And now, auntie," said Walter, "here are two very docile and attentive scholars come for a promised lesson on moral courage."

"Oh, but I have not promised them a lesson," said Miss Huntingdon, laughing.

"No, auntie, perhaps not; but your hands have,—these hands, which were crossed at breakfast, they have promised the lesson."

"Well, dear boy, that is true in a measure, but I hardly know how to begin. I have nothing to rebuke or find fault with in you, unless it was just a little want of consideration in your dealing with Amos; but I am sure you meant no unkindness."

"Certainly not, auntie, not a bit of it. But now I don't quite understand about Amos and his leaving off taking butter. It has something to do with that selling of his pony, I'm sure. Perhaps you can explain it, and give us a lesson of moral courage from it, illustrated by historical examples."

"I will try, dear boy. The fact is—and I am under no promise of secrecy in the matter; for while Amos is not one to sound a trumpet before him to proclaim his good deeds, he has no wish to hide them, as though he were half-ashamed of them—the fact is that Amos wishes to save every penny just now, in order to be perfectly free to carry out anything he may see it right to undertake in this scheme of his for bringing back your dear mother once more amongst us. Every farthing spent on himself he grudges, and he would not for the world draw on your father; so he has not only sold his pony, but has also given up taking butter at meals, having made me promise, as I am housekeeper and hold the purse, to give him in money the worth of the butter he would eat, that he may put it to this special fund for his cherished scheme. And I have gladly consented to his wish. It is but a small matter, and he knows it, but it is through small things that great good is brought about. As Martin Tupper says, 'Trifles light as air are levers in the building up of character.' This self-denial on the part of dear Amos brings out and heightens the nobility of his character; and

when the occasion for such self-denial shall have passed away, it will leave him far advanced on the upward and heavenward road."

"He's a brick, every inch of him," said Walter, in a voice half-choked with tears; "and much more than a brick too—he's a great square block of marble, or Scotch granite, as fine a one as ever Freemason tapped with a trowel—there. And now, auntie, for the historical examples."

"My first," said Miss Huntingdon, "is that of a very remarkable man—John Wesley, the father of the Methodists. An order having been made by the House of Lords in his day for the commissioners of excise to write to all persons whom they might have reason to suspect of having plate without having paid the duty on it, the accountant-general for household plate sent to Mr Wesley a copy of the order, with a letter stating that hitherto he had neglected to make entry of his plate, and demanding that he should do it immediately. Mr Wesley replied:—'Sir, I have two silver tea-spoons at London, and two at Bristol. This is all the plate I have at present; and I shall not buy any more while so many around me want bread.—Your obedient servant, John Wesley.'

"My next example is that of an equally remarkable man, Oberlin, the French pastor of Ban-de-la-Roche, a wild mountainous district between Alsace and Lorraine, where, single-handed, and in the midst of extraordinary difficulties and privations, he was privileged to work wonders amongst a most ignorant and poverty-stricken people. The knowledge of several pious and excellent institutions had reached the secluded valley where Oberlin was stationed before it was received by the rest of France. No sooner had he learned that there were Christians who left their homes to convey to the benighted heathen the promises of the gospel, than he parted with all his plate, with the exception of one silver spoon, and contributed the proceeds of the sale to mission work, expressing at the same time his regret that he was unable to send more. That one silver spoon he afterwards bequeathed as a legacy to the Church Missionary Society.

"I have yet another example of the same kind to bring forward. It is that of a most earnest and devoted American missionary, Reverend George Bowen of Bombay. This good man was once an infidel. His father was a rich man; but when he himself was converted, he gave up friends, country, and fortune, and consecrated himself and his whole life to the service of Christ among the heathen. For many years he lived in a miserable hut

in the native bazaar, among its sadly degraded population. Yet he was a man of deep learning and refined manners, who had travelled much, and knew some dozen languages. After spending about a year in India, he was led to believe that his influence would be greater if he were not in the receipt of a salary from a missionary society; so for thirty years past he has received none. For some years he earned his livelihood by giving an hour daily to private tuition; for a still longer time he has trusted to the Lord to supply his need without such occupation, and has always had enough and to spare.

"Now I have not mentioned these cases because I think we are all bound to do as these good men have done. When God calls to such special sacrifice, he gives special faith and grace for it; but he does not call all Christians to the same. My reason for selecting these instances has been that I might put them before you as beautiful examples of that kind of moral courage which is exhibited in acts of exalted self-denial. And surely we may learn from them this lesson, to be more willing than most professing Christians are to deny self, that we may do good to others, or carry out some great and self-sacrificing purpose. And another thing is to be noticed in such examples as these, that it requires more moral courage to go counter to our own tastes, likings, and habits in comparative trifles, and to persevere in this course, than to make some great sacrifice on the impulse of the moment."

"Thank you, dear auntie," said Walter. "Yes, you have hit the right nail on the head; for our dear hero Amos has been showing just such steady, persevering moral courage. I see it all. Well, I hope I shall be the better for what you have told us."

At dinner-time Walter was nowhere to be found; all that was known was that he had gone off on his pony, and had left a message behind him that he had a little bit of business in hand, and that they must not wait dinner for him if he should happen to be late. The other members of the family were not particularly surprised at his absence, knowing that he would be leaving home for the sea-side next day, and that he might have some little matter to settle with some friend in the neighbourhood. But they became a little anxious when old Harry remarked, in reply to a question from his master, that he had seen Master Walter ride off two hours ago with his rifle and fishing-rod in front of him, and that it seemed to him a little late for catching a big fish and then blazing away at him. By nine o'clock, however, Walter had returned, his pony evidently having had a sharp gallop home.

"Much sport, Master Walter?" asked the butler, who was standing in the stable-yard when he rode up.

"Oh, pretty good," was the reply; "just a whale or two, and some half-dozen sharks."

"They must have been tremendous big 'uns, I should say," remarked the old man, "for they seem to have swallowed your rifle and your rod."

"Ah, they just were," replied Walter; and then he made his way rapidly into the house.

That same night, as Amos was preparing for bed, Walter looked in, and walking up to his brother, said, "Here, Amos, take this; it's my little contribution towards the general expenses,"—saying which, he put ten sovereigns into his brother's hand.

"Walter, Walter! what does this mean?" cried Amos, touched and greatly agitated.

"It's all straightforward and above board," replied the other; "it means simply that I've been and sold my favourite rifle and fishing-rod, and one or two other trifles, and that's the money I got for them. Nay, don't look so astonished. What! you didn't think to have a monopoly of the self-denial, did you? You see I don't quite mean to let you."

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## **Chapter Twenty One.**

### **"By the sad sea-waves."**

Next morning the brothers and their sister set off in high spirits for their temporary home at the sea-side. As Mr Huntingdon parted with Julia his voice trembled and his eyes swam with tears. She had got such a strong hold on his heart now that he felt it hard to part with her, even for a time. "She is so like what her mother was at her age," he said mournfully to his sister, as they turned back into the house, when the carriage had fairly carried the young people away. Old Harry was quite as much affected as his master, though he showed it in a different way. The sight of "Miss Julia as was" getting into the carriage to go off again was almost more than he could bear. She saw it, and kissed her hand to him. At this he gave a sort of jump, and then jerked his elbow against his side with all his might, a proceeding

intended to suppress the outward exhibition of his emotion. Then, when his master and Miss Huntingdon had returned to the breakfast-room, he stood gazing at a full-length portrait of Mrs Huntingdon, taken in her younger days, which hung in the hall, and bore a very striking resemblance to Julia Vivian as she now looked. Having feasted his eyes with the portrait for a minute or so, Harry uttered out loud one prolonged "Well;" and then betaking himself to his pantry, sat down after he had slammed to the door, and put his elbows on his knees and his face between his hands. And there he sat, his breast heaving, and his throat gurgling, till at last the simmering of his feelings fairly boiled over in a hearty flood of tears. "What an old fool I am!" he exclaimed at last. "It's all the better for her; and why, then, should I take on in this way? But, eh! she getting so like an angel—not as I ever seed one, only in a picture-book, and that had got wings, and she ain't got none. But she's getting the right look now; she's got into the narrow way, and so has Master Walter too, only there's a bit of a swagger at present about his pilgrimage, but it'll all get right. They've got Master Amos with 'em, bless his heart, and it ain't much of the devil's head or tail as'll show itself so long as he's got the management of things. And they'll all be back again by-and-by, and the dear old missus too, I'm sure of it; so it'll all be well." Comforting himself with this thought, the old man wiped his eyes with his ample spotted pocket-handkerchief, and proceeded with his work, which he enlivened with a half—out—loud accompaniment of texts, scraps of hymns, and fragments of wise and proverbial sayings.

In the meantime the carriage was conveying the happy trio of travellers to the station, which being safely reached, they took train, and in the afternoon arrived at their destination. Amos had secured a nice little roomy cottage close to the seashore, which was in the hands of a middle-aged motherly woman, who, with her only daughter, a girl some fifteen years of age, waited on her guests. Having deposited their luggage, and ordered a substantial tea, the little party strolled down on to the sands.

It was a lovely summer day, and the sun was now hastening to the west. The tide was still running down, though it had come nearly to the turn, and its gentle rush, as it broke into a thousand sparkles of foam at each returning wave, made music in their ears. Far away to the left tall cliffs rose up, their majestic fronts scarred with the batterings of unnumbered storms. On either hand the shore swept round, completing the arc of one wide-extended bay, cleft in many places by paths which led up, now through lanes overhung by rocks of various

coloured sand, and now along downs of softest turf, to the little town, or, further off, to solitary dwellings or clustering hamlets. Pebbles of dazzling whiteness lined the upper part of the slope down to the beach; and these were succeeded by a broad and even flooring of tough sand, along which visitors, old and young, found safe and ample space for exercise. There was no grand esplanade or terrace with its throng of health and pleasure-seekers. It was emphatically a quiet place, with its few neat lodging-houses and humble shops, one solitary bathing-machine, and a couple of pleasure boats now hauled up high and dry. To those who might seek excitement at the sea, this little retreat would have proved insufferably dull; but to those who brought their resources with them in heart, mind, and purpose, there was all that could be needed to cheer, elevate, and delight,—the grand old ocean, outspread in its vast dignity of space; the invigorating breezes; the passing ships; the glories of the most magnificent of nature's painters, even the sun himself, who spread his tints of gold, crimson, and purple in broad, dazzling bands from the extreme verge where sea and sky met up to the centre of the blue vault overhead, though here in hues paler, yet as intensely beautiful. And all around now breathed peace. No storm was now ploughing up the water into mountains of angry foam; but a quiet ripple and a gentle splash at regular intervals soothed the spirit by the harmony of their ceaseless fall.

The three travellers felt the tranquillising influence of the scene. To Amos it was one of unmitigated pleasure. The others, no doubt, would naturally have preferred a livelier spot, but now the consciousness that they were there to aid in bringing about a great and noble object made them content and happy for the time. So, after a long stroll on the beach, they returned, when the great glowing ball of the sun had withdrawn the extreme edge of his fiery rim below the horizon, to their cottage.

Having finished their evening meal, a consultation was held as to the best way of carrying out the purpose which had brought them from home. The obvious thing seemed to be that Amos should go over alone to the house where his mother now lived, which was distant some eight or nine miles from their lodgings, and see what the physician in whose keeping she was might advise or suggest. So, early the next morning, he rode forth with a beating heart, and at the same time a happy trust, on his errand of love, his brother and sister having arranged to pay a visit for the day to a fashionable watering-place about five miles distant along the coast.



When Amos Huntingdon had reached his mother's retreat and told his errand, he confided to the good physician under whose charge Mrs Huntingdon was placed his great purpose, and the hope that it might now be accomplished, since his sister had returned to her home. The kind-hearted friend at once entered into his plans, and gave him every encouragement to hope that he would meet with good success. But care and judgment and tact must be used, lest, in endeavouring to bring back the mind to its old balance, anything should be done which might rather throw it further out. Nothing sudden or exciting must be attempted; for the delicate structure, which care and sorrow had disarranged, must be brought into a right adjustment by gentle and cautious treatment. The jarring chords could not be made to vibrate in tune by sweeping them with a rough and unsympathising stroke; all could be reduced to harmony only by some loving and judicious action which would draw up or slacken the discordant strings with a force which would be felt only in its results. It was therefore arranged that on the morrow the physician should bring his patient to the sea-side at noon, and that, while he and she were seated in view of the waves, and were listening to their soothing plashing, Amos and his brother and sister should pass near, and be guided in what they should do as circumstances might suggest. "Your mother," said the physician, "simply wants her mind clearing; all is more or less confused at present. She grasps nothing distinctly; and yet she is often very near a clear perception. But it is with her mind as with a telescope: it is near the right focus for seeing things clearly, but simply it wants the adjustment which would bring it to the point of unclouded vision, and then, when that adjustment has been reached, it wants to be kept fixed at the right focus. I cannot but hope that we may be able to come near to that adjustment to-morrow."

Amos returned to his cottage much comforted. His brother and sister had not yet come back from their visit to the neighbouring watering-place; but at last they appeared, but not in the best of spirits. Something had gone wrong with them, but Amos was too anxious to talk over the morrow's effort to ask them many questions about their excursion.

And now the critical day arrived. The sun rose gloriously, lighting up the heavens as he emerged from his eastern bed with a fan-shaped outpouring of his rays which streamed up over one hemisphere of the heavens, painting the edges of myriads of small fleecy clouds with a transient crimson splendour. The sea was almost glass-like in its calmness, only heaving up and down sluggishly, as though reluctant to be

moved in its mighty depths. But, further out, a gentle breeze was filling the snowy sail of some graceful cutter as it stole across the bay, or steadily swelled out the canvas of some stately ship as she sped on with all sail crowded on her towards the desired harbour.

Just a few minutes before noon, Amos, with beating heart, saw his friend the physician conducting two ladies to a sunny bench on the edge of the shingles, facing the open sea. "Let us go," he said to his brother and sister, "and walk near them, but take no notice at first." So they all repaired to the beach, and with deeply anxious hearts drew near the little group. Which of the two ladies was their mother? One of them would probably be the physician's wife. They neared the sitters, and passed on in front of them slowly, arm in arm. Who would have thought that mother and children, who had not met for years, were now so close to one another, and yet must for a while remain severed still? As the three on foot were passing the bench, Amos just bowed his head to the physician, and then looked at his two lady companions; and so did his brother and sister. There could not be a moment's doubt—the children knew their mother at once. The dear familiar face was there, and not materially changed. And did the mother know her children? Something told her that they were beings in whom she had an interest; she saw in them something familiar. Yet she had not at all as yet grasped their relation to her with a realising consciousness.

"Pass on," said the physician softly; and they passed on. A look of bewilderment and pain came over the face of the afflicted lady as the three walked forward. She followed them eagerly with her eyes. They turned towards her again, walking slowly back, and her face at once lighted up with a smile. "Sit down near us," whispered the physician to Amos, as he came up close to him, and all three sat on the sloping bank not many feet away from the bench. Oh, how the heart of Amos ached with yearning to throw his arms round his mother's neck; but he knew that it must not be yet. Julia and Walter also found it hard to restrain their impetuosity.

"Who are they?" at last said Mrs Huntingdon to the doctor. These were the first words that for seven years had fallen from that mother's lips on the ears of her children. How full of music were they to those who had so long mourned her loss!

"They are visitors come here for change of air and to enjoy the sea," was the reply.

She looked puzzled. "I think I have seen them before," she said, and put her hand to her forehead.

"Shall they sing something?" asked the physician.

"Oh yes! it will be so sweet; it will remind me of old times," she said.

Then Walter and his sister, at a nod from the doctor, began the touching duet, "What are the wild waves saying?"

Their mother listened with delight. Then she said, "That used to be one of my songs; I used to sing it with—with—ah, yes, with my husband Walter. Pray sing something else."

Then the three united in singing "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds."

As verse after verse was given by the three voices melodiously blending, a new light seemed to dawn into the lady's eyes. "Ah!" she cried, "I used to sing that hymn with my dear children. Let me see. Yes, with Julia, and Walter, and Amos.—These are my dear children, are they not?"

"Yes, yes, dear mother," cried Julia, unable to control herself.

"Who called me mother?" cried Mrs Huntingdon excitedly, and was about to rise, but the physician gently held her back, and motioned to her children to restrain themselves.

All was silent for a while, and then the medical man began to talk in an ordinary way with the young people on indifferent subjects, but all the while marking the effect of their voices on their mother. She was manifestly coming to feel that those voices were very familiar to her, and to have her heart and thoughts drawn out towards the speakers. "We will move on now," said the physician after a few minutes had been spent in general conversation. Then, giving his arm to his patient, he turned to her children and said, "Shall we meet here again the day after to-morrow at the same hour?" Amos bowed his assent, and, without any special word of farewell, they parted.

On the appointed morning the same party met on the beach. The good doctor at once began, "I have brought your mother to see you to-day, my young friends. She was a little confused when you last met, not having been quite well; but I believe you will find her comfortable now."

"Yes," said Mrs Huntingdon, "it is all right now. Yes, I see you are my dear children, Julia, and Amos, and Walter; but what a long time it seems since I last saw you! Come to me, my children."

They gathered round her, eager to show their love, and yet fearing to be too demonstrative.

"Ah, well," she continued, "Dr Atkin has told me all about it. He says that I have not been well—that my mind has been confused, but is getting better now. Yes, you are my Julia, and you are my Walter and Amos. How kind of you to come and see me. And—and—your father, my husband, how is he? How it all crowds back upon me!"

"You must not excite yourself, dear mother," said Amos.

"No, dear boy, that's true," she replied; "but all will be well, no doubt. Will you sing me a hymn?" So they all drew close to her, Julia laying her head in her lap, and there feeling a mother's tears dropping fast upon her forehead, while Amos and Walter each held a hand. Then all joined in a hymn, Mrs Huntingdon taking her part.

As the party were breaking up, Dr Atkin took Amos aside and told him that the lost balance was now nearly recovered, that his mother had become able to think connectedly, and that the tangle in her mind had, through the judicious intercourse with her children, and the associations that intercourse had called forth, been unravelled and smoothed out. She might now form one of their party at the cottage, and by a careful avoidance on their part of all undue excitement, and the engaging her in cheerful and well-chosen subjects of conversation, the restored reason would become settled and strengthened, and she might return in a few weeks to her old home, and be able to bear by degrees the recurrence of old memories which old familiar scenes would call up, and the resuming of those duties and responsibilities from which her infirmities had so long shut her out.

Oh, with what thankfulness did Amos hear the physician's conclusion; and how warm and loving was the welcome which greeted the poor restored one as she entered, a few days later, the sea-side cottage, and took her place in the comfortable armchair arranged for her in a snug corner, where she could look out upon the sea, and at the same time be close to all those dear ones who were now once more truly her own. And day by day, as the mind of that beloved mother became clearer

and stronger, they were able with prudent gentleness to make her understand the state of things at home and the sad history of her unhappy son-in-law; while at the same time Amos never lost an opportunity of directing his dear mother to that Word of consolation, which he knew would be to her, as it had been to himself, the only true and satisfying fountain of abiding peace. And thus it was that she now learned to love that Bible which, in former days, had never been really her stay, for she had not then given her heart to Him who is the author, the centre, and the giver of all truth, peace, and consolation.

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## **Chapter Twenty Two.**

### **A Slip on the Road.**

It will be remembered that Julia and Walter had an excursion to a neighbouring fashionable watering-place about five miles distant, and spent the day there while Amos was making his first call at his mother's retreat, and that they returned in the evening out of spirits, something evidently having gone amiss with them. The incidents of that excursion will sufficiently explain the cause of their depression.

It can readily be understood that Walter's progress in the higher paths of duty on which he had now sincerely entered was not at all times equally rapid. He was always meaning well, and could "put on a spurt and row hard against the stream," as he himself expressed it, from time to time, but the long, steady, and regular stroke he found it very hard to keep up. Naturally full of spirits, cherished and encouraged in thoughts of his own superiority, and accustomed, as long as he could remember, to have pretty much his own way, it was no light thing for him to put a curb on his inclinations, or to check sudden impulses when they were in the direction of what was dashing or generous. So that, while his deliberate convictions were on the side of all that was right, he was very liable to be led to swerve a little from the narrow path when any sudden strain was put upon him by his own natural or acquired tastes, where he could not gratify these with a safe conscience.

With Julia the case was different. Long had she resisted the hand that would have led her heavenwards by trial and sorrow. High-spirited, self-willed, and self-absorbed though not selfish, she had struggled long against those cords of love which were drawing her out of the pathway of error and death. But she had

yielded at last, and, having yielded, she struggled no longer. Her one great and abiding desire now was to make progress on the higher road. Not that she had lost her relish for amusement or her interest in outward things; but her spirit was chastened,—a new light burned within her. Not that she loved Walter less, but she loved Amos more; her heart was now more in unison with his, and she could now appreciate the delicacy, and deep tenderness, and consideration of his self-sacrificing love towards herself, which she had in time past so cruelly flung back upon him, and occasionally almost resented. So that now she felt it to be both her duty and her privilege to mark and copy the nobility of his unpretending but sterling character.

Such were brother and sister as they cantered off along the sands on the morning when Amos set off to call on and consult Dr Atkin about his mother. It was a charming summer day. The sea was sparkling in its numberless wavelets; a gentle breeze blew with just so much pressure in the faces of the riders as to add vigour to their spirits as they plunged forward against it. Sea-birds wheeled round and round before them, and everything spoke of brightness and enjoyment. The five miles, partly along the sands and partly along roads skirting the edge of the cliffs, and affording a magnificent extent of sea-view, were soon completed. Walter was full of life and fun, only regretting that he could not work up his sister into a mood as buoyant as his own. However, he did his best, and satisfied himself that it was only natural that the pressure of old sorrows could not yet be wholly taken off from Julia's heart.

And now they were come to the outskirts of the little town. It was the height of the season, and gaiety and frolic seemed masters of the place. Old and young were to be met with at every turn, and, with the exception of the manifest invalids, all looked radiant with smiles, as though determined—and who could blame them?—to extract as much pleasure out of their little period of holiday as the place and its occupations could afford them. It so happened that the watering-place was this day flooded with one or two large arrivals of excursionists. These had evidently come down with the intention of making the very most of their time, and doing the whole thing thoroughly. Walter and his sister were highly entertained by watching some of these excursionists. Here, for instance, was the family of a worthy mechanic who were intent on getting the utmost possible out of the occasion that time and means would allow. Father, mother, children old and young, including a baby, with the wife's old father and mother, made up the party. Hastening from the station to the beach, the whole family sat

down together on the sands for some ten minutes or so, inhaling, with widely opened mouths, copious draughts of sea-air. Then the younger ones mounted donkeys, and the father and mother each a pony, while the old folks looked on. Having raced about hither and thither on the jaded animals in abrupt jerks of speed prompted by the resounding blows of the owners of the unfortunate brutes, all betook themselves to a sailing-boat; and landed again after half-an-hour's sail, mostly pale, and with dismay in their looks, which manifestly proclaimed that "a life on the ocean wave" was certainly not a life to their taste. Then the old grandfather called to the driver of an open carriage, and took an airing in it with his wife, both sitting close behind the coachman with their backs to the horses, and leaving the best seat vacant, utterly unconscious that they were occupying the less desirable position, and smiling all the while blandly on the general public, pleased to have, for once in a way, a little taste of the pleasures of a higher grade of society than their own. The ride over, the entire party, baby and all, dived into some obscure region, where an unlimited amount of hot water and stale shrimps could be had for a very trifling charge.

While Walter and his sister were amusing themselves by watching the excursionists, they became aware of being the object of notice to two young men who were walking slowly along the esplanade near them. But they were so absorbed with what for the time had got their attention, that they failed to give any special heed to these strangers. Having put up their horses, they made for the sea, and mingled with the numerous comers and goers, keeping a special eye, from time to time, on the mechanic's family and their doings. They were gazing down from the esplanade upon the busy crowds rushing backwards and forwards on the sands below them, when the two young men who had before noticed them passed slowly by them, raising their hats. The two were Saunders and Gregson. Now, it is true that Walter had, as he called it, dissolved partnership with these his old companions, and had not met them since the day of the sad disaster in the park; but, nevertheless, there still lingered in his heart a measure of liking for them which he could not altogether get rid of, and a certain amount of regret that all intercourse with them had been broken off. So he looked round hesitatingly as he marked their salutation, and they noticed it. Again they neared one another, and this time the young men smiled, and Walter returned the smile. Then the two stopped, and Gregson said, "Come, old fellow, shake hands; you've treated us rather shabbily to cut us as you have done, but we cannot bear the thought of our old friendship being so easily

broken up. We've had many a jolly day together, and why should it not be so again?" He held out his hand, and Walter could not, or did not, resist the impulse to grasp it warmly. Then Saunders must have a similar grip, and Walter could not bring himself to refuse it. After this Julia was introduced, and the four went about amicably together, the two young men warming up, as they saw Walter's resolution melting away, and rattling on with all sorts of light and frivolous talk, which grated sadly on the ear and heart of Julia Vivian.

It was now one o'clock, when Gregson exclaimed, "You must all come to the Ship, and dine at my expense. Nay, my dear old fellow"—addressing Walter—"I'll not hear of a refusal. You know how I let you in for that second sovereign at the match, when Jim Jarrocks won so cleverly. I didn't mean it, of course, but you must allow me the pleasure of making some little amends by having you and your sister as my guests to-day." Julia tried, by a gentle pressure of her brother's arm, to dissuade him from accepting the invitation, but without avail. Walter felt that he was now "in for it," and must go through with it. So the four companions walked to the Ship Hotel, and partook of an excellent dinner ordered by Gregson, in a private room which commanded a full view of the sea and the crowds of pleasure-seekers who were swarming along the sands. Both the young host and his friend Saunders drank wine and beer freely. Walter, who had never been given to excess, was more cautious; but partly from the excitement of the occasion, and partly, it may be, to drown some uncomfortable whisperings of conscience, he took more of these stimulating drinks than he would have thought of doing under ordinary circumstances, and the result was that he was prepared, when the meal was over, to take his part in any scheme of fun or frolic that his new companions might propose. Julia saw this with deep shame and regret, but she also saw that now was not the time to remonstrate. She did speak to her brother, as they were leaving the hotel, about returning at once, as she did not wish to be late; but Walter replied in an impatient tone that there was plenty of time, and they might as well have a little bit of fun first. So, with trembling heart she took his arm as they emerged on to the esplanade, resolved that, at any rate, come what might, she would keep close to her brother, and be as much a check upon him as possible.

The four now made their way to the sands. As they did so, they observed a considerable number of the visitors making their way in a body towards a spot where a crowd had evidently assembled. "What's up now?" cried Gregson. "Let us go and



see." They all joined the stream of walkers, and at last reached a spot where a large company of listeners were gathered round a group of men, some of whom were distributing tracts among the people, while one with a grave but pleasing countenance, standing on a stout oak stool which was firmly planted among the shingles, was giving out a verse of a popular hymn preparatory to addressing the spectators.

"Ain't this capital?" said Gregson to Walter and Saunders in a loud whisper. "Won't we just have a rare bit of fun!" He then spoke in a low voice in Saunders's ear, and the young man stole round to the opposite side of the crowd. When the hymn had been sung, and the speaker was in the very act of commencing his discourse, a loud mew from Gregson, who was affecting to look very solemn, made the good man pause. He made a second attempt; but now a noise as of two cats fighting violently came from the opposite side of the concourse. The poor preacher looked sadly disconcerted; but when the pretended mewing and wrangling were continued, the sense of the ludicrous seemed to prevail in the crowd over everything else, and there was one general outburst of laughter, in which no one joined more heartily than Walter. The crowd began to surge backwards and forwards, and many to move off. But the preacher still maintained his stand. "Come here! come here!" cried Gregson in an undertone to Walter. Julia felt her brother suddenly disengage his arm from hers, and then he was lost in the crowd. A few minutes later, and there was a movement among the audience—if it could now be called an audience—in the rear of the speaker; and during the confusion, Julia, who was gazing intently on the spot where the preacher stood, saw two faces crouching down for a moment. One was Gregson's, the other was Walter's; and then two hands clutched the legs of the stool, and the preacher was pitched head-foremost into the sand. A roar of mirth followed this performance, but it soon gave place to cries of "Shame! shame!" Then there was a lull, and then a profound silence, as the good man who had been so cruelly used planted his feet firmly among the shingles, and said in a clear and unfaltering voice, "My friends, may the Lord forgive these misguided young men for their uncalled-for and unprovoked interference and ridicule! But their malice shall not stop the good work. Here I stand to preach God's truth; and here I mean to stand, if the Lord will, every day during the season, opposition or no opposition, persecution or no persecution. Let us sing another verse of a hymn." Amidst the profoundest stillness, and evidently with the hearty sympathy of the bulk of his hearers, the good evangelist proceeded with his holy work.

"Come along! come along!" whispered Gregson, creeping round to Walter, who had now regained his sister, and was feeling heartily ashamed of himself. They all hastened back to the hotel. Walter was now thoroughly subdued, and with a very cold leave-taking of his former friends, he and his sister sought their horses, and made the best of their way to the cottage, exchanging but few words as they rode along. Such was the shameful and sorrowful ending of what had promised to be a very happy day.

And now, when Mrs Huntingdon had been a few days established in the cottage, by her own earnest request, and with the hearty concurrence of her children, their aunt came over to spend a little time with them. This she could the more easily do as her brother was fully occupied with his endeavours to secure the return of the candidate whose politics he agreed with. Surely there can be few, who have a large circle of relations of different degrees of nearness, who have not among these some pre-eminently special ones who draw to themselves a more than ordinary share of affection from all their kindred—a special sister, or brother, or cousin, who does not however, make others less loved, while being the privileged object of a peculiarly tender regard. Such a special aunt was Miss Huntingdon to all her nephews and nieces. A visit from her was everywhere hailed with rejoicing. And so now every heart was glad when she joined the little party at the sea-side cottage. To Mrs Huntingdon the coming of her sister-in-law was eminently beneficial; for her tender love, her wise and judicious counsels, her earnest prayers, all helped to establish the restored mother in a healthful and happy tone of mind, and were the means of guiding her to that perfect peace which dwells nowhere but in the hearts of those who have sought and found in their Saviour the friend who loves above all others.

When Miss Huntingdon had been at the cottage two or three days, and was walking with Amos and Walter by the ebbing waves, Julia having remained behind with her mother, Walter suddenly stopped, and said, "Auntie, I have something very sad to tell you, and I want your advice."

Both his aunt and Amos looked at him with surprise and anxiety, and then the former said, "Well, dear boy, I am sorry that there should be anything troubling you; but if I can be of any use or comfort to you in the matter. I shall be only too glad."

"Sit down here then, Aunt Kate, if you please, on this bank; and if you are not both of you heartily ashamed of me and disgusted with me when I have told you all, well, you ought to be."

When all three were seated, Walter fully related his adventure at the watering-place, concluding with the attack upon the preacher, laying a full share of blame on himself, and ending with the words, "Now, dear auntie, what do you say to that?"

Both his hearers looked very grave, and were silent for some time. At last Miss Huntingdon, laying her hand lovingly on Walter's shoulder, said, "Dear boy, it is certainly a sad story, but you were led into what you did from want of watchfulness; and as you are now aware of your fault, and are sorry for it, I should not, if I were you; needlessly distress myself, but just make, if you can, some amends."

"Ah! that's the point," cried Walter; "you mean, of course, make some amends to the good preacher. Yes, that can be done, for he said he should be at his post at the same hour every day during the season. But it will require some moral courage to do it, and no little of that valuable article too. Now I am sure, dear auntie, you have in that cabinet of your memory one drawer at least full of examples of moral courage, and you can pick me out one to suit this case."

"Yes, dear boy," said his aunt, smiling, "I daresay I can; for ever since you first asked me to help you in the matter of moral courage by examples drawn from real life, I have been noticing and storing up in one of these drawers you speak of whatever instances of moral courage have come before me in my reading."

"What, then, is it to be to-day, dear Aunt Kate? Can you find me one that will show me how I ought to act in this sad business?"

After reflecting for a few minutes, Miss Huntingdon began: "I have rather a strange moral hero to mention now, and yet he is a most real one. His name is James Comley. He was for years a confirmed infidel—a most intelligent man, but in utter spiritual darkness. He lived at Norwich, and carried on the business of a tea-dealer. He had indoctrinated his wife and children with his own infidel views, and had never lost an occasion of publicly assailing the truths of religion. But at last he was brought to see the misery of his condition. He prayed earnestly for light, and God gave it him at last, and he became a truly changed man. And now, mark his conduct after this change had taken place. He at once tore down some lying placards which covered the

shutters of his shop and the whole front of his house—placards which stated that his tea business was 'The Eastern Branch of the Great European Tea Company,' which company, in fact, had no existence. He disposed of about seventy empty tea-chests, which had been so arranged in his shop as to suggest the idea of an immense stock. A huge bale of unused placards he carried into the Norwich market-place, where he addressed the crowd that awaited his arrival, and then carried this bundle of lies to Mousehold Heath, where, after the singing of a hymn, praying, and addressing the crowd which had accompanied him, he committed it to the flames. He after this began publicly to preach that gospel which for nine years in Norwich he had done his best to destroy. Here was true moral courage indeed; and perhaps his example may be a help to you, dear Walter, in showing you what you ought to do."

Her nephew had listened with the deepest interest, and now remained buried in thought. At length he said: "True, dear auntie; I see it all; my duty is plain enough. James Comley had publicly insulted God and religion, and he made amends as far as he could do so. At any rate he showed his sincerity by coming out boldly as an honest man, and as one who was sorry for the past, by his publicly burning those placards and then preaching the truth which he used to deny and revile. And I ought to do the same. I mean that, as I did a public wrong in open daylight, and before many people, to that good man at Stringby, so my duty is to go over to Stringby and just as publicly to confess to him, and to the people who may be there, and in open daylight, my sorrow for what I did. That's just it, auntie, is it not?"

"It will certainly be making the best use of my example, dear boy," she replied, "and will be showing true moral courage; but no doubt it will involve much self-denial, and require much strength from the only true fountain of strength."

"It shall be done, and to-morrow," said Walter firmly.

"Would it be any comfort or help to you if I were to go with you?" asked Amos.

"The greatest comfort in the world," cried his brother joyfully; "yes, and let Julia come too. She was grieved to see me led away as I was, and it will therefore be a happiness to me if she will come with us and hear my confession."

And so it was arranged.

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## Chapter Twenty Three.

### Unexpected Fruit.

The next day, after luncheon, the brothers, with their sister, started for Stringby, but not in very buoyant spirits. Walter had no thought of drawing back, nevertheless he felt an almost overwhelming shrinking from the task which he had undertaken. The loving smile, however, and gentle words of affectionate concern with which his aunt had cheered him as they set off were a source of much strength and comfort to him; they hovered around his heart like the shadowing wing of an angel whenever the scorching heat of his furnace of trial swept by anticipation across his shrinking spirit. He had thought it wiser not to confide to his mother either the cause of his shame or his intended amends.

The weather was clear and bright as they began their ride, but a smart shower burst upon them when they had accomplished half the distance, and forced them to go out of their way to take shelter. Would the preacher, distrusting the sky, have given up his work just for this afternoon? If so, what pain and humiliation Walter would be spared! Oh, how he clung for a few moments to the hope that it might be so! for then he would have made the amends and the sacrifice, and shown the moral courage, *in intention*, and, at the same time, would be spared the actual heavy trial itself. But then he dashed away these thoughts from him, and with an inward prayer nerved himself for the coming effort.

Amos, as he rode by his side, seemed to guess what was passing through his mind, and said, "Can I speak to the preacher for you, Walter? It will save you some pain, and, as I shall be speaking for another, I should not have the same difficulty that you might feel." But this suggestion at once roused Walter out of all his fears. "No, no, dear Amos," he cried, "no; I have put my foot in it, and I must go through with it. Your being with me will be a great help, and it would not be right for me to accept any further assistance from you."

Little more was said on the way. Julia scarcely opened her lips, but there was a sweet peace on her fair face. She felt that her brother Walter was going to do the right thing, and, though she thoroughly sympathised with him in his natural shrinking from his task, she was satisfied that he could not now retreat if he

would do what duty plainly called him to. So they trotted or cantered leisurely along, while the dashing of the waves, and their ceaseless ebb and flow, seemed to remind them of that love which, in the midst of the ceaseless ebb and flow of this world's trials, and of man's personal failures and advances in the life of holiness, ever comes, like the sea-breeze, in breathings of spiritual health and heavenly pity to the souls that are pressing onward and upward to the land unclouded by sin.

At last the watering-place was gained. It seemed to Walter and his sister more thronged than ever. Several large excursion trains had brought their many hundreds of eager and excited holiday-keepers. Esplanade, sands, and by-streets were swarming with passers to and fro. Would they meet Gregson and Saunders there? Most earnestly did Walter and his sister, and indeed Amos also, hope that they would not. However, little time was there for scanning the faces of those they met, for now they pressed rapidly forward, Walter leading the way, as he was anxious to plunge at once into his difficult work and get it over as speedily as possible. "You know," he said to Amos with a faint smile, "it's just like going to the dentist's. When you get into his room, you don't go and ask to look at his instruments,—those horrid pinchers, and pliers, and screw-looking things,—it's quite bad enough to feel them; and the sooner the wrench comes the sooner it'll be over. So now for my wrench." As he said this, they came within sight of the place where the unhappy disturbance occurred in which he had taken a part. A crowd had gathered, on the outskirts of which, people were moving backwards and forwards, but there were no sounds of uproar or interruption as they reached it. All were very attentive. The preacher—the sight of whom caused the blood to rush into Walter's face—was the same he had encountered before. The good man was standing on his stool giving out two lines of a well-known hymn. And then a noble volume of praise from those united voices rolled up towards heaven.

Walter could see in a moment that the preacher's eye had rested on him, and that he remembered him. So, flinging his horse's reins to his brother, he slipped off his saddle and elbowed his way vigorously through the crowd. "Stop, young man," said the evangelist calmly and solemnly, as he saw Walter pressing forward. But Walter made his way close up to him, and, while the other was evidently perplexed as to the meaning of his conduct, said quietly to him, "I am not come here to-day to hinder or make game, but to ask pardon." The other looked at him in amazement, and for a moment knew not what to say. Then, while there arose a strange buzz of surprise

and excitement among the bystanders, Walter asked, "May I stand in your place for a minute, and say a few words to these people?" The good man was clearly taken quite aback by this request, and looked hard at him who had made it. Was this a scheme for turning the preacher and his work into open ridicule? The other members of the evangelist's party seemed to think so, and advised him to refuse; that it was only a dodge on the young man's part to get up a piece of extra rich entertainment for his friends, who, no doubt, would not be far off. The good man had come down from his stool while these remarks were being addressed to him. He hesitated, but when he turned to Walter and looked in his face his mind was made up at once; for there was something, he said, in that face which satisfied him that good would come out of his yielding to the request made, and not evil. So, while the spectators were looking on and listening with breathless expectation, he said, in a clear voice, audible to those on the utmost verge of the great assembly,—“Friends, before I address you, a young man has asked leave to occupy my place for a short time. He shall do so, for I have confidence in him that he will not abuse the liberty I give him.”

There was a murmur of approbation and intense interest as Walter mounted the stool and looked upon the sea of upturned faces round him. He was very pale, and his voice trembled at first, but soon grew calm and firm. “My friends,” he began, “I have come here to-day to do an act of justice. Some days ago I was a spectator in this place, as you are now. This good man, the preacher, stood then where I now stand. He had come here to try and do you good; I came, I am sorry to say, in a different spirit. Joining with others as wrong and foolish as myself, I interrupted and ill-treated this servant of the good Master, our Saviour. I am come to-day to make what amends I can. As I then publicly ill-treated him, so I now equally publicly ask his pardon for what I did then; and I earnestly beg you all to give him a patient hearing, and to encourage him in his work of love.”

Not a word of this short address was lost by a single hearer, though the last part was almost stifled by the speaker's emotion. As for the preacher, he knew not how to contain himself. When Walter had sprung to the ground amidst the profoundest silence, both his hands were grasped by the good man whose pardon he had asked, who, as he shook them warmly, could only say at the moment, “The Lord bless you! the Lord be praised!” Then, recovering himself, he sprang upon the stool, and cried out, “That's a right noble young man, dear

friends! There's real courage there, and a generous heart, and no mistake. He has asked my pardon for what he did, and, had I twenty hearts, he should have it from the bottom of each. I thought, when he came here a few days since and put a little hindrance in the way, 'Now, the devil's very busy; what a crafty being he is!' Ah, but see now. After all, he only outwits himself by his own craftiness. The Lord brings good out of Satan's evil. Well, now, let us proceed with our proper work." These words were followed by a hearty cheer from the assenting crowd, and then all listened attentively while the good man gave a plain, practical, faithful, and pointed gospel address.

When this was over, and the crowd was dispersing, Amos, whose heart was all in a happy glow, drew near the preaching-place with Julia, both of them having now dismounted. The good evangelist's fellow-helpers were distributing tracts among the retiring audience, while the preacher himself was in earnest conversation with Walter. Julia held out her hand for some tracts, saying to the man who gave them, "I will do my best to distribute them among those who will be likely to benefit by them. Please let me have as many as you can spare." He gladly did so.

In a short time all had left, except the preacher and his friends, Amos, and his brother and sister. As Walter was about to go, he took out his purse and said to the good man who had so heartily forgiven his former unkindness, "You must allow me to offer you a contribution to your tract fund. I am sure you will understand me. I am not asking you to accept this as any compensation for my abominable treatment of you the other day, but simply as a little token of my sincere desire to help on your good work in however small a way."

The offering was at once and gratefully accepted. "There is no fear," said the good man, smiling, "of my taking offence at anything which the Lord sends me, or at the way in which he chooses to send it. The work is his, and the silver and the gold are his, and he supplies us with the means in the best way, as he sees it, and therefore in the very best way. So I thank you for your contribution, and accept it with pleasure; and I think we shall neither of us forget this day as long as we live, neither on this side of the river nor on the other."

With a hearty farewell on both sides, Walter and his companions remounted their horses, and rode slowly away, full of happy thoughts: Walter very happy, because he had been enabled to do what his conscience had bidden him; Amos quite as happy, because the brother he loved so dearly had behaved so nobly;



and Julia calmly happy, because she felt that bright sunshine had poured through a dark cloud which had brooded for a while sadly over her spirit. And there was something yet more stirring in her heart in consequence of all that she had seen and heard,—it was a rising desire to be doing some real good to others, and to be doing this at the cost of personal sacrifice and self-denial. Ah, what a new and strange desire was this in one who had, till lately, allowed the idol of self to occupy the shrine of her heart. To be thinking of others, to be steadily keeping the good of others in view, to put self-pleasing in the background, or to find it in pleasing others, and that, too, from love to one who for her sake pleased not Himself,—this was something wondrous indeed to her, and yet how full of real and heavenly brightness when it had truly found an entrance into her soul!

But how and where was she to begin? She had a little bundle of tracts in her hand; should she begin at once with these? Of all things which she once would have shrunk from, nothing would have then been more repulsive than the office of a distributor of tracts. Some years before, when once asked by a pious friend of her aunt if she would like a few tracts to give away as she might have opportunity, her reply had been, "She had rather not, for she believed that tracts were vulgar, canting things, commonly given by hypocrites to their neighbours when they wanted to deceive them under a cloak of affected godliness." She had been rather proud of this reply, which certainly for the time had the effect of completely shutting up the good lady who had recommended the tracts to her notice. But now she felt very differently, and looked at the little bundle in her hand, thinking how she might use it to the best advantage. Not that she felt naturally drawn to the work; it would require a considerable effort on her part to bring herself to offer a tract to a stranger, and a far greater effort to accompany the offer with a word or two from herself; but she now believed that she *ought* to make the effort, and that word "ought," the idea of "duty" which it kept before her, was beginning to exercise a constraining force hitherto unknown to her. And there was a special advantage in the tract. Just the giving of it without comment would be a good preparation for more close and personal work in the loving Master's service. So, grasping the papers with a trembling hand, she began to look out for an opportunity of parting with some of them, and she had not long to wait. When the little party turned away from the spot where the preaching had been held, and were thinking of returning to their cottage, as they were just directing their horses' heads homewards, Julia uttered a sort of suppressed cry or exclamation, which at once drew the anxious attention of both her brothers to her.

"Anything amiss, dear Julia?" asked Amos and Walter together.

"No, not exactly," she said in a troubled voice, and with a scared look. Then, recovering herself, she pointed to a young woman dressed rather fantastically, who had just passed them in a direction opposite to that in which they were going. "Do you see that woman?" she asked in a low humbled voice; "she is one I have reason to know too well. She was associated in a theatre with poor Orlando. Oh, I wish I could do her some good! Let us follow her; perhaps she would take a tract."

Who would have thought of such a speech from Julia Vivian a few days back? But the earnest desire to do that poor outcast creature good had evidently got possession of her, and so the three turned their horses' heads in the direction in which the actress was walking. But the object of their loving pursuit had now quickened her pace, and turned up a by-street before they could come up with her. Should they follow? Some impulse urged them forward. The side street led to a square or large open piece of ground, in the centre of which was erected a temporary theatre. The woman whom they were following was just about to enter this building, but turned about and looked back before doing so. Her eyes met those of Julia, and she at once recognised her with a peculiar smile, which sent the blood rushing back to Julia's heart, and made her for the moment half resolve to turn and fly from the place. But she resisted the feeling and held her ground. The next moment the woman had entered the theatre. The little party lingered for a few moments, and then the theatre door again opened, and several persons in various stage dresses came out and gazed on the newcomers. Then they began to wink at one another as they stared at Julia, and to break out into a broad grin. How earnestly did the object of their curiosity and merriment long to rush away out of the reach of those mocking eyes and sneering lips! Yet she did not move. A purpose was coming into her heart; she might never have such an opportunity again. Yet how weak she felt in herself. But then she lifted up her heart in prayer to the Strong One, and, turning with blanched face, but perfect calmness, to her brothers, asked them to help her to dismount, and then, leaving her horse's reins in Walter's hands, advanced towards a group of some dozen persons of different ages who had come out of the theatre to gaze and to make merry.

"You know me, I see," she said, in a voice sweet and sad, but clear as a bell in its utterances, "and I know you. You knew my poor husband in times gone by, but not lately. He is dead; and your time must come too. He was pointed to that Saviour who

alone can make a death-bed happy, and I *hope* he was able to see him. His last words were, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' You and I shall probably never meet again. I have gone back to my early home, and wish to forget the past, but I could not see Jenny Farleigh go by without wishing to say a kind word to her, and this has brought me to you. I believe God has changed my heart; I have learned to know something of the love of my Saviour, and I am happier now than I have ever been all my life. Oh, if you would only give up your present life and come to the same Saviour, how happy you would be! Don't be angry with me for saying this, but just each of you take one of these little papers from my hand as a token of good-will on my part, and read it when you are alone."

She paused, having uttered these words with deep feeling, but at the same time in a steady and fearless voice. The effect on her hearers was overpowering. Not a scornful eye, not a sneering lip remained when she had finished, but sobs and tears burst from those who had for long years known little other than fictitious weeping. Each took the offered tract, each returned with warmth the kind pressure of her hand as she parted from them; and as she remounted her horse, one voice was heard to say, "Poor thing! God bless her!" Then all shrank back into the theatre, and the happy three turned homeward once again. And oh, with what deep thankfulness did all make their way along the cliffs, and then close to the incoming tide, whose every wave seemed to throw up for them a sparkle of joy in its glittering spray! Few words, however, were spoken. Amos could hardly realise that this moral heroine was the sister whom he had once known so weak, so self-willed, so unimpressible for anything that was good and holy. Walter also was utterly staggered and humbled when he reflected on what he had just witnessed, though at the same time he was truly happy in having been strengthened to carry out his own noble and self-denying purpose. As for poor Julia, she could hardly believe that she herself was the person who had addressed that group outside the theatre walls. Oh, it was so strange, so terrible, and yet so blessed! for through that newly-opened door of work for the gracious Master bright rays from the flood of glory in which he ever dwells had been pouring in upon her soul.

The happy three reached their cottage, overflowing with love to one another, and all anxious that Miss Huntingdon should be a sharer in their happiness, when she should hear what a bright and blessed day had been granted them. So they sought her in the evening, when their mother had retired to rest. Seated at her bedroom window, the four looked forth upon the mighty

deep, now rolling in its great waves nearer and nearer, and every wave flashing in the silver light of the full-orbed moon. And surely the moonlight streaming down upon those waves, like God's calm peace on the billows of earthly trial, was in sweet harmony with the feelings of that little group, as Amos and Julia poured out their account of Walter's noble address, and as Amos and Walter told of the unexpected and loving self-sacrifice exhibited in the conduct of their darling sister. Need it be said that in Miss Huntingdon they had one who listened with almost painful interest and thankfulness to the adventures of that never-to-be-forgotten day? Drawing them all round her, she poured out her heart in praise to God for what he had done in them and by them, and in prayer that they might be enabled to persevere in the glorious course on which they had all now entered. And now, when all were again seated—a little mound or pyramid of young hands being heaped together over one another in Miss Huntingdon's lap—Walter's voice was first heard. "I want an anecdote, an example of moral courage, auntie; and it must be a female one this time, for we have a moral heroine here, there can be no doubt about that."

"There is no doubt of it, I am sure," replied his aunt; "and there can be no difficulty in finding moral heroines, as well as moral heroes. Indeed, the only difficulty lies in making the most suitable selection from so many. Our dear Julia has shown a moral courage such as I am certain she could not have done had she not sought strength from the only unfailing fountain of strength; and so I will take as my example one who was surrounded, as Julia was, by persons and circumstances which might well have daunted the stoutest heart, much more the heart of a poor and desolate young woman. And my example will be the more appropriate because it will bring before us a scene which is closely connected with the seashore—such a seashore, it may be, as we are now gazing on, with its sloping sands, and waves rushing up higher and higher on the beach. My heroine, then—and she had a fellow-heroine with her—was a humble Scottish girl who lived in the reign of Charles the Second, when the poor and pious Covenanters were bitterly and remorselessly persecuted, even to the death, because they would not do violence to their consciences and deny the Lord who bought them. Many of them, you know, were hunted by the king's savage soldiery among the hills and mountains, and, when overtaken, were slain in cold blood, even when in the act of prayer.

"Margaret Wilson, my heroine, was a young girl of eighteen. She was taken prisoner by the soldiers, tried, and condemned

to die, because she steadily and courageously refused to acknowledge the supremacy of any other than Christ in the Church. A few words might have saved her life; but she would not utter them, because they would have been words of falsehood, and, though she dared to die, she dared not tell a lie. So they brought her out to the seashore, such as is before us now. The tide was rising, but had not then begun long to turn. She had a fellow-sufferer with her of her own sex—one who, like herself, preferred a cruel death to denying Christ. This fellow-sufferer was an aged widow of sixty-three. The sentence pronounced against them both was that they should be fastened to stakes driven deeply into the sand that covered the beach, and left to perish in the rising tide. The stake to which the aged female was fastened was lower down the beach than that of the younger woman, in order that the expiring agonies of the elder saint, who would be first destroyed, might shake the firmness of Margaret Wilson. The water soon flowed up to the feet of the old woman; in a while it mounted to her knees, then to her waist, then to her chin, then to her lips; and when she was almost stifled by the rising waves, and the bubbling groan of her last agony was reaching her fellow-martyr farther up the beach, one heartless ruffian stepped up to Margaret Wilson, and, with a fiendish grin and mocking laugh, asked her, 'What think you of your friend now?' And what was the calm and noble reply? 'What do I see but Christ, in one of his members, wrestling there? Think you that we are the sufferers? No. It is Christ in us—he who sendeth us not on a warfare upon our own charges.' She never flinched; she sought no mercy from man. The waves reached her too at last; they did the terrible work which man had made them do. The heroic girl passed from the hour of mortal struggle into the perfect peace of her Saviour's presence."

As she finished, Julia looked with tearful eyes into her aunt's face, and said gently, "Dear auntie, Christ was her strength; and," she added in a whisper, "I believe he was mine."

"Yes, yes, precious child," said Miss Huntingdon, drawing her closely to her, "I am sure it was so; and the one great lesson we may learn from our three heroines is this, 'I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.'"

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## **Chapter Twenty Four.**

### **The Crown Won.**

All was now peace in the little cottage. Mrs Huntingdon's once clouded mind was daily gaining in clearness and strength, not only from the loving and judicious attentions of her children, but still more from the inward peace which had now made its dwelling in her heart. Ah! surely in nothing is that declaration of holy Scripture, that godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come, more evidenced than in the healthful tone which God's peace in the soul imparts to a mind once disordered and diseased. Few, comparatively, are aware in how many cases that which the world so specially prizes, "a sound mind in a sound body," is enjoyed by its possessor because that mind belongs to one whom God is keeping by his indwelling Spirit in perfect peace. It was so with Mrs Huntingdon. She had found the only true rest, and so was daily making progress in strength both of body and mind. And her thorough establishment in this improvement in physical and mental health was helped forward by the presence of her grandchildren, whom Miss Huntingdon had brought with her to the cottage. Their coming carried her back in thought to the days when her own children were as young, and bridged over the gulf of sorrow which had come in between; so that the painful impressions made when memory recalled that sorrow grew fainter and fainter in the happy light that shone on the path of present duties, just as the waking terrors from some frightful and vivid dream fade away more and more, till they vanish and are forgotten in the full, broad, morning sunshine and the realities of work-day life. Nor were her grandchildren a source of comfort and improvement to her alone. Their own mother had now learned to look upon them in a very different light—no longer as clogs impeding her steps as she pressed on in pursuit of pleasure and excitement, but as precious charges intrusted to her by the great Master, to be brought up for him, and in training of whom to walk on the narrow way by her side she would herself find the purest and highest happiness to be enjoyed on earth. So all things were now going on brightly at the cottage. Peace, harmony, and love had their abode there; and never did a happier party go down to meet the incoming tide, and listen to its gentle music, than might be seen when Mrs Huntingdon, her children, grandchildren, and sister-in-law issued forth for a morning stroll along the beach, to gather shells, or drink in the bracing air, as they watched some passing ship, or the sea-birds as they dashed across the spray.

But now thoughts of home, and of the restoration to that home of their dear mother, were busy in the hearts of Amos and his brother and sister. Mrs Huntingdon herself ventured only a hint or two on the subject, for she felt that in this matter she must

leave herself in the hands of her children. When *they* saw that the fitting time was come, doubtless the return would be brought about. On the other hand, Amos was most anxious to spare his father any pain which he might suffer from anything like an abrupt disclosure of the intended return home of his wife. The matter would require gentle and delicate handling, lest the happiness of that return should in any degree be marred to Mr Huntingdon by his feeling that his advice should have been asked and his wishes consulted before even so happy a consummation should be brought about. So, after the subject had been talked over with Miss Huntingdon, it was unanimously resolved that she should be the person to break the happy tidings of his wife's restoration to health to her brother, and should advise with him as to the most suitable day for her going back again to the old home. To this arrangement she cheerfully consented, and in a few days returned alone to Flixworth Manor, to the great satisfaction of Mr Huntingdon, who was getting heartily tired of his solitary life.

And now she had to make her important disclosure, and how should she best do this? Unknown to her, the way had already been partially opened; for one evening, when the squire was taking his dinner all alone, and Harry was waiting on him, he said to the old man, "Rather dull work, Harry, without the young mistress and the children."

"Ay, sir, to be sure," was the butler's reply; "the house ain't like the same. It has got quite like old times again."

"Yes," said his master, sadly and thoughtfully; "something like old times. Well, we shall have Mrs Vivian back again shortly."

"And the old missus too, maybe, afore so very long," said the other quickly.

"What *do* you mean?" asked his master in a disturbed voice.

"Oh, beg pardon, sir," cried Harry; "I hardly knew what I was saying—it came natural like; but stranger things has happened afore now. You must excuse me, master; I meant no harm."

The dinner over, the squire leaned back in his armchair, and began to turn over many thoughts in his mind. Harry's words kept recurring to him, "And the old missus too." Well, why not? Hitherto he had never thought the matter over at all. He knew that his wife had continued much the same, neither better nor worse. He knew also that to have brought her back while her daughter was shut out of the house would have only been the

means of aggravating her complaint; and it had not yet seriously occurred to him that Julia's return might remove a difficulty and be a step towards restoring her mother to her old place in her home. But Harry's words now disturbed him and made him restless,—“And the old missus too.” Could it indeed be brought to pass? Might not the sight of her daughter in the old home, occupying the place she used to hold, and of the other children living with her in harmony and love, act so beneficially on her as to restore her, with judicious and tender treatment, to reason, happy intelligence, and home once more? As he admitted these thoughts into his heart, his bosom heaved, the tears fell fast from his eyes, he pressed his hand on his forehead, and, looking up, murmured a prayer for guidance. Harassed and worn by electioneering business, and sickened with the din and unnatural excitement connected with it, how he yearned for the quiet peace and affectionate realities of his home society; and with that yearning came now a special longing to see once more, in her accustomed chair, her who had dwelt so long in banishment from him. And yet he scarcely knew how to take the first step in the bringing about of that which he so earnestly desired. “I must leave it till Kate comes home,” he said to himself with a sigh; “she will be sure to suggest the right thing, and to go the right way to work in the matter.” How great, then, were the relief and happiness of Miss Huntingdon when, on the evening of the day of her return home, her brother himself introduced the subject by saying, “Dear Kate, I have been thinking a good deal of late whether it would not be possible to get my dear Mary back to her old home again. You know one great hindrance has now been removed. She will find our dear Julia once more ready to welcome her, and that, I daresay, if the meeting were well managed, might go a great way towards her cure.”

With what joy, then, did Miss Huntingdon gradually unfold to her brother the fact that the cure had already been accomplished, and that nothing now remained but for him to fix the day for receiving back to his heart and home her who had been so long separated from him. Most gladly did he acquiesce in the plans proposed by his sister as to the day and manner of his wife's return, promising that he would duly restrain himself at the first meeting, and that he would endeavour to erase, by his future consideration and attention to her every wish, any painful scar that might remain from harshness or unkindness in times past. Miss Huntingdon was most deeply thankful that her path had been thus smoothed by the wise and tender hand that guides all the footsteps of the trusting people of God; and she felt sure that a bright eventide was in store for those so truly



dear to her. With her brother's consent she wrote to the cottage, fixing an early day for the return home, thinking it wiser to remain at Flixworth Manor herself, that her presence, when the earnestly desired meeting should take place, might be a comfort to all parties, and might help to dispel any little cloud which memories of the past might cause to hover even over an hour so full of gladness. The day came at last. All outside the Manor-house was as bright as well-kept walks, closely-mown turf, and flower-beds gay with the rich and tastefully blended tints of multitudes of bright and fragrant flowers, could make it. Harry had taken the fine old entrance hall under his own special care. How the bedrooms or sitting-rooms might look was not his concern, but that the hall should look its venerable best, and that the plate should be bright, that was his business; it was for him to see to it, and see to it he did. Never were plate-powder and wash-leather put into more vigorous exercise, and never was old oak staircase and panelling bees'-waxed and rubbed with more untiring energy; so that, as the western sun poured his rays in through windows and fanlight, a cheery brightness flashed from a hundred mirror-like surfaces, including some ancestral helmets and other pieces of armour, which glowed with a lustre unknown by them in the days when they were worn by their owners. "That'll do, and no mistake," said the old man half out loud, as, dressed in his best, he walked from one corner of the hall to another, standing a while at each to take in fully all the beauties of the prospect. "Yes, that'll do; don't you think so, Polly?" Now this question was addressed, not to a fellow-servant, for all were at the time busily engaged elsewhere, but to a grey parrot, one of those sedate and solemn-looking birds whose remarks are generally in singular contrast to their outward gravity of demeanour. The parrot made no reply, but looked a little bewildered. "Ah, I see how it is," said Harry; "you are puzzled at so much brightness. Why, you can see yourself reflected a dozen times. What a satisfaction it will be to the dear old missus to see a likeness of herself in every panel as she walks upstairs." Satisfied with this thought, he looked round him once again with an air of considerable contentment—as well he might, for everything spoke of comfort, refinement, and welcome, and of the diligent hands and loving hearts which had provided these. So, with one more glance round, he again exclaimed, "Yes, it'll do; and I think the dear old missus 'll think so too," at the same time bowing low to the parrot, whose only reply, "Pretty Poll," was appreciative rather of her own attractions than of those of her surroundings.

And now a sound of wheels was heard, and all the inmates of the house crowded into the hall. A minute more and the steps were reached, and the hall-door was opened by a trembling but faithful hand. The young people were the first to alight; and then Mrs Huntingdon, handed out of the carriage by Walter, and leaning on the arm of Amos, entered once more the home she had left so sadly. Her husband's arms were at once round her, but he restrained himself by a strong effort, and just drew her gently very closely to him, whispering to her, as audibly as tears would let him, "Welcome home again, my dear, dear wife." And she returned the loving pressure, and spoke in subdued voice her thankfulness to be at home with him once more; and then they stood apart and gazed earnestly at each other. Ay, there was change in each. Time and care and sorrow had done their work and ploughed their furrows; but there was a sweet peace which neither had before seen in the other, and, to Mr Huntingdon's glad surprise and almost awe, a heavenly beauty in his recovered wife's face which he knew not then how to account for, but he was not long in learning its source.

And now, as husband and wife, once more united, were about to move on, old Harry stepped forward, and with the profoundest of bows, and a very unsteady voice, wished his old mistress all health and happiness for many long years among them. Mrs Huntingdon could not trust herself to speak, but she held out her hand to him, which he took as gently in his own as if it had been some article of ornamental glass of a peculiarly brittle nature, and then saluted it with a fervent kiss; after which, rather abashed at his own proceeding, he shrank back, and allowed the happy travellers to make their way upstairs. But he could not be satisfied with having given so partial a vent to his feelings. So, when the hall was again all his own, he began to trip round it in a measured sort of dance, to the intense amusement of Julia and Walter, who were looking over the banisters from above on the performer, who was not conscious at the moment of being so observed. On the old man went, waxing more and more energetic, till at last he swayed himself into the centre of the hall, and gave expression to the vehemence of his feelings in a complicated sort of movement which he intended for a jump or spring, but which brought him down on all fours, amidst a burst of irrepressible laughter from the young people who were looking on. A little disconcerted, Harry was just recovering his feet, when the parrot, who had learned a few short phrases in times past, principally from Walter, and had now been eyeing Harry's movements, with his grey head on one side, and his thoughtful eye twinkling restlessly, exclaimed, in an almost sepulchral voice, "What's up

now?" The old man stared comically at the unexpected speaker, and then said, as he brushed the dust off his knees, "What's up now? why, you stupid old bird, there's a great deal that's up now. I'm up now, though I was down a minute ago. And Miss Julia as was and Master Walter's up now, for they're up on the landing a-laughing at me. And the dear old missus is up now; she's up in her room with master, and we don't want her to be down in spirits no more. There, Polly, I've answered your question, and answered it well, I think."

Never did a happier party gather round the dinner-table at Flixworth Manor; never did the old butler ply his office with a readier hand and a brighter countenance. Dinner over, and all being grouped together in the drawing-room, where many loving words had passed, Walter turned to his father and said, "I have two requests to make to you, dear father."

"Well, my boy, what are they? they must be strange and unreasonable indeed if I refuse to grant them on such a night as this."

"I don't think, father, that you will call them so."

"Well, what are they?"

"The first is, that Amos may be our chaplain just for once at family prayers to-night."

All looked surprised, but none more so than Amos himself. Half rising from his seat, he laid a remonstrating hand upon his brother's arm; but it was now too late. The colour flushed over his face, and he looked uneasily at his father's countenance, which was much troubled; yet there was no look of anger there, but rather a shade of deep sadness had crept over it. The truth was, Mr Huntingdon had always entertained a profound respect for religion, and an equally profound contempt for hypocrites; but nothing beyond this had till lately been thought by him to be necessary for his taking his place in society as a respectably religious man. He wished all his dependants to be sober and honest, and to go to church, read their Bibles, and say their prayers; and what more could be required of him or them? And, in order to set a good example in his family and to his tenants, he always himself conducted family prayers night and morning, reading a few verses of Scripture, and a plain and suitable prayer. Nevertheless, he had simply done this hitherto as a duty, as a matter of form, and always rose from his knees with a mingled feeling of satisfaction at having performed a duty, and of relief that a somewhat irksome task was over. But now a

new view of religion, its duties and privileges, had begun to dawn upon him; but still he had scarce light enough yet to see his way to taking a different stand. So, when Walter preferred his request that Amos should be chaplain for that evening, a painful sense of deficiency on his own part clouded his spirit, while at the same time he was truly anxious to do anything which would be a step in the direction of real improvement and spiritual blessing to his household. The cloud, however, soon melted away, and holding out his hand to Walter, and grasping his hand warmly, he said, "With all my heart, my dear boy; nothing could be better. Let Amos be chaplain to-night, and not to-night only. I am getting old, and his younger voice and more experience in such matters will make it a good thing for us all if he will take the family prayers whenever he is at home." As he concluded with faltering voice, Amos began to remonstrate in words of earnest deprecation; but his father stopped him, and, laying his hand on his shoulder, kindly said, "Do it to please me, and to please us all, dear boy." Then, turning to Walter, with every shade removed from his countenance, he asked, "And what is your second request?"

"That's not a very hard one to grant," replied Walter, smiling, "though perhaps you may repent of saying 'Yes' when you suffer the consequences. My second request is, that I may be allowed to make a short speech when family prayers are over."

"Granted at once, my son," was Mr Huntingdon's reply; "I am sure you will have an attentive audience."

"Ah, it may be so, father; but I'm not sure that every member of my attentive audience will hear me willingly."

And now, when the gong had sounded and the whole family, including the servants, were gathered for the evening devotion, Amos, calm and collected, took his seat at the table, and when all were assembled, opened the Bible, which Harry had, by his master's direction, put before him, at the hundred and third Psalm. Deeply touching were those fervent words read out with solemn earnestness and pathos by the young man, in the presence of those he loved so dearly, specially when he lingered on the third and fourth verses, "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies." The psalm finished, all knelt, and then, in tones low and trembling at first, but gaining in power and firmness as he proceeded, Amos poured out his heart in supplication and thanksgiving,—thanksgiving that all the members of that family were once again united under that roof

in health and peace; and supplication that they might henceforth, if spared, go hand in hand along the narrow way, as true followers of Him whose service is perfect freedom.

Not a tearless eye was there in that company as all rose from their knees, no one being so deeply affected as Mr Huntingdon, who drew Amos to him with a tenderness which more than repaid his son for every sacrifice and suffering in the past. "And now," said his father, when the servants had left the room, "we are all waiting for your promised speech, Walter." The smile with which the young man rose to his feet passed away as he saw all eyes earnestly fixed on him. For a moment he hesitated, and then began: "Father and mother dear, I have been learning for some time past some very important lessons; and my two teachers are here before you—the one is my dear aunt Kate, and the other is my dear brother Amos. My aunt has taught me with her lips, and my brother by his life.—Nay, Amos, you must not interrupt the speaking. At this moment I am in possession of the house.—My lessons have been on the subject of moral courage. I used to think I was very brave, and didn't need any instruction on such a subject. I looked down upon, and would have despised, only I couldn't, the noblest brother that ever brother had.—Ay, ay, it's no use shaking your head, Amos; I am speaking nothing but the truth.—Over and over again I have shown myself a moral coward; over and over again Aunt Kate has set before me, at my own request, examples of moral heroism from history and real life, just to suit my case and stir me up to better things; and over and over again I have seen acted out by my brother there the very lessons I have been so slow in learning. Ah, it has been grand teaching! We have had such a lot of moral heroes,—Columbus, and Washington, and Howard, and Luther, and Fletcher, and a score more. But here is my moral hero," saying which he threw one arm round his weeping brother's neck, and put a hand over his mouth as he proceeded. "Yes, you must hear me out now. Here is the brother who, with a moral courage that never nagged, that no unkindness, no misunderstanding could bend, has been carrying out for years one great purpose, which God has permitted him this day to bring to a full accomplishment. That purpose we all see fulfilled in our complete family gathering to-night. Yes; Amos is my hero of heroes, and he *shall* hear me say it. I ask his pardon now for all my unworthy treatment of him. He *is* my hero, for he has nobly conquered. He has conquered us all, but none more completely than the brother who looks upon it as one of his dearest privileges to be permitted to love him and to try and copy his example."

What could Amos do? what could he say? Clinging to the impulsive brother who had thus spoken out impetuously what all felt to be true, and sobbing out his regrets that such words should have been spoken of one who felt himself to be so undeserving of them, he was utterly at a loss what to reply, nor did any one for the moment venture to add a word. But at last the silence was broken by the clear and gentle voice of Miss Huntingdon. "It may be, dearest ones, that a few words from myself may not be out of place after dear Walter's speech. He has indeed spoken the truth. Our noble Amos has certainly shown us, in the carrying out of his great heart-purpose, true moral courage in many of its most striking forms. But he has not been alone in this. I have been a privileged teacher by word of mouth, as Walter has said; and right nobly has he learned and applied his lessons, and been pressing forward in his brother's steps. And not only so, but dear Julia has been also learning and practising these lessons. And now I think I need occupy the teacher's place no longer. I would rather give up my place to the great Teacher of all,—to Him who both by word and example shows us moral heroism in its perfection of sublimity. I have not hitherto ventured specially to dwell on him as being in this, as in every other excellence, the one perfect pattern, because Walter wished to be encouraged by examples in those who were imperfect and shortcoming creatures like ourselves. But I would now express the hope that we may all henceforth find our happiness in taking Him for our teacher, guide, and model who never shrank from duty, even when to perform it wrung from him tears of agony and a bloody sweat, and who held on his course through evil report and good report, spite of blasphemy, persecution, and a bitter and shameful death, till he had finished the work which his Father had given him to do, and had won for us the victory over sin and death, and an imperishable crown of glory."

**The End.**

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